

BEYOND THE BOSPHORUS



THE AUTHOR.

Frontispiece.

BEYOND THE BOSPHORUS

LADY DOROTHY MILLS

AUTHOR OF "THE ROAD TO TIMBUKTU," ETC.

WITH 35 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



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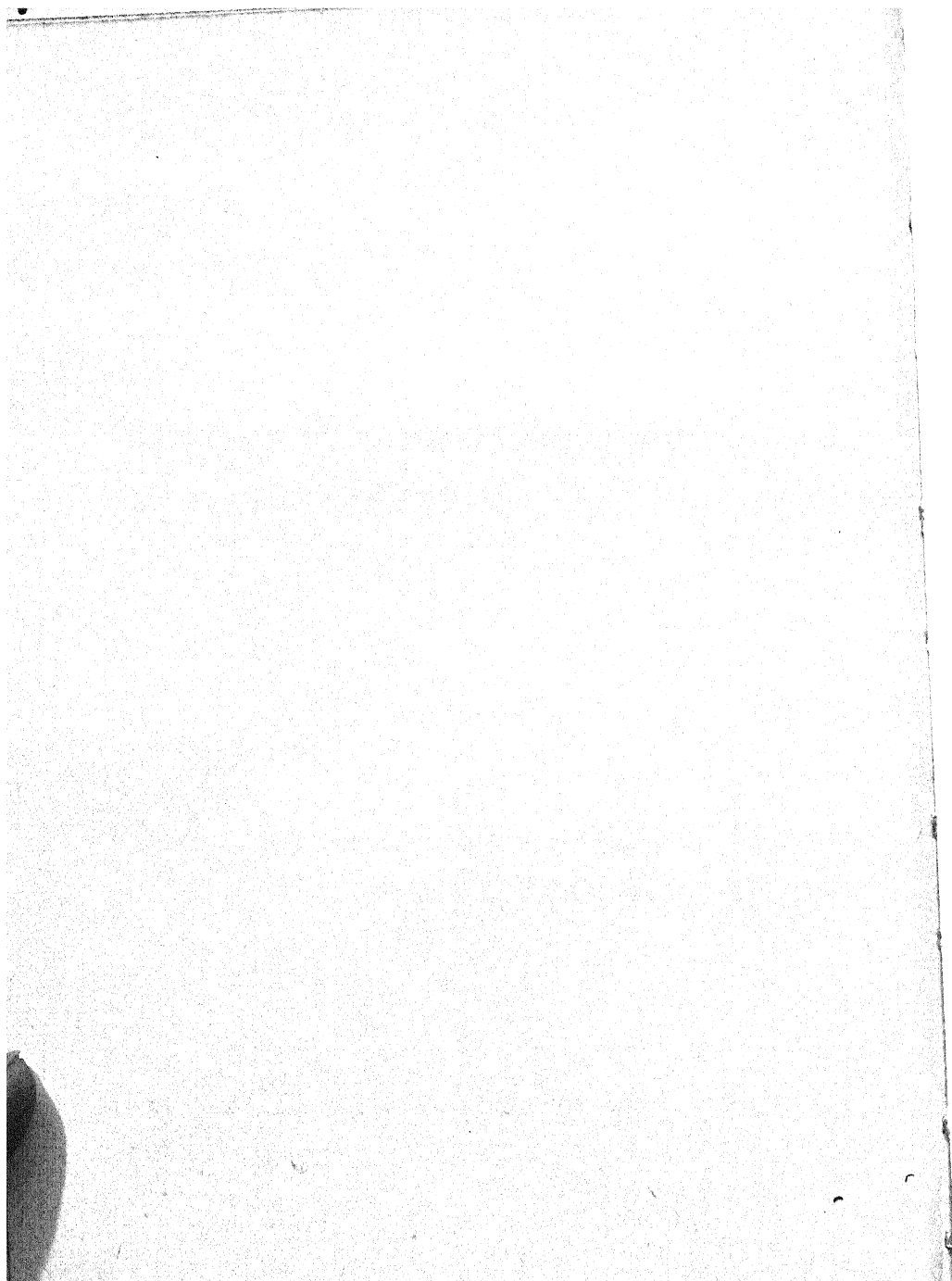
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“ Et moi, j'ai plus de souvenirs que si
j'avais mille ans ”

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PRELUDE

THIS book is the rambling and disjointed story of a wild-goose chase that started inauspiciously in mid-winter after a more than inauspicious autumn—one of those periods in which life, as an American pithily and with feeling has put it, is just one — thing after another ! I had planned a most enchanting trip through Central Asia. I had dreamed of treading the Golden Road to Samarcand, of re-living the legends of Tamerlane, I had imagined losing myself among the great Tartar Hordes, whatever they may be, 'way up near the Chinese frontier, of making a pious pilgrimage through the country of the Arabian Nights and seeking the Great Roc's egg among the summits of the Caucasus. I had also cherished a more mundane dream of purchasing the nucleus of an Astrakhan coat at the place of its birth for a five pound note. In fact, I had laid careful bait for my own particular species of Blue Bird—and it had resolved itself into a handful of moth-eaten wild-goose feathers. For the necessary permits from Moscow were not forthcoming, though I waited till hope deferred had made my heart very sick indeed.

But the road called, and one cross-roads is as good as another to pick up the trail from, and as for wild-goose feathers, well, one can at least trim a hat with them !

Eventually, minus an itinerary of any kind, minus money, or hope, or anything but a sneaking trust in the great bearded god of nomads who has generally befriended me, ill and tired and depressed I entrained at Victoria in the watery haze of a grizzling January morning with a cheap ticket to Constantinople in my pocket.

Followed a confused blur of days and nights in a

variety of jolting trains that seemed to stop noisily everywhere ; and everywhere it rained, when it didn't snow, and all the stations bore a cousinly air of resemblance. Ostend, Brussels, Cologne, Nuremberg, Vienna loomed and receded. Every five minutes or so, it seemed, polyglot creatures gratified a morbid curiosity concerning my luggage, tickets and passport. We passed through so many different countries that one forgot what language to order meals in. One never had the right brand of money and was mulcted accordingly, and filled in the empty hours with abstruse calculations as to the relative value of meals that had cost four billion marks, or sixty thousand kronen, or fifty dinars, or seventy levas, or a hundred piastres, till it dawned on one that they had all cost from half a crown to three and six apiece.

Catastrophe fell heavily after Buda-Pesth when it was discovered that I was in the wrong train and careering towards realms unwarranted by either my ticket or passport. Whereat the entire *personnel* of a perfectly good express gathered in mass formation and, with the pomp and volume of sound of the Heavenly Host ejecting Lucifer from Celestial regions, cast me out into the snow near the Roumanian frontier. Then I was lost for two whole days in Central Europe, boarding all sorts of ridiculous trains, wandering miserably in towns of whose languages I knew no word to cry aloud my needs and tribulations. One night I slept the sleep of exhaustion in a nest of suitcases that I built in the corridor of a second-class "wagon"; on another, in haggard desperation, I chartered a kind of royal suite that for want of a crowned head happened to be vacant.

Of those dark hours I have a few bright memories. One is of a most charming and cosmopolitan waiter at the station buffet of Buda-Pesth who spoke with nostalgia of happy years when he had "waited" in all my favourite restaurants in London, who spoke, as the Chinese speak of their ancestors, of my pet

maître d'hôtel, who was proud to have helped Lord Lonsdale to Bisque and who had been the personal friend of the butler of a distinguished relative of my own (and if the last sentence sounds rather Ollendorffian it must be remembered that for a moment I am "reminiscing" in German!). Another bright memory is of a young American, surely a descendant of the Good Samaritan, who took pity on my bleating helplessness at Belgrade and showed me the habits of the natives so effectively that on leaving their gayest cabaret somewhere round midnight I caught the Sofia express with less than a minute to spare! Altogether it was a horrid journey, a blot on the scutcheon of one who talks with patronizing fluency of the mid-African bush, and I should like to say that I managed the return one considerably better.

My first thought as we ran into Constantinople on the evening of the sixth day was: "Well, I'm glad I brought my goloshes!" The sleeping-car attendant, whom evidently I had over-tipped, was most anxious that my first impression should be a good one.

"Jolie, jolie," he murmured as he swabbed down the wet window panes. I was conscious of a steamy vista of dilapidated European buildings, narrow, water-logged, cobbled streets, and the fact that it rained like a wet Sunday in London. A tapering minaret vanished behind another conglomeration of square, ugly buildings from whose many windows hung homely articles of family laundry. On the drive up to Pera I had an impression of tram-cars, an unusual quantity of banks, flamboyant cinema posters, and more rain.

I was tired and depressed and ill, and for hours I lay awake with stone-cold feet, cursing wild-geese feathers.

I continued to curse the latter pretty effectually during the few days that followed as, still tired and ill and depressed, I tramped through glacial streets trying, with the pig-headedness of desperation, to

reconstruct a semblance of my cherished Blue Bird. Polite obstruction ruined my temper, the icy wind off the Bosphorus gave me a feverish cold that kept me in bed for awhile. I suffered all the pangs of disappointment and defeat, I was cross because I could not get warm, because the cobbled streets and infinity of little steep steps hurt my feet, because I had struck a bad hotel, because Constantinople was not in the least as I had imagined it, because all the smart officers wore goloshes, because no one wore a beard, because the touts and guides were ubiquitous, because, in fact, of everything.

Later I was to learn that Constantinople, or rather Stamboul, meeting place of East and West, in May is a triumph of charm. I was to learn the grey and gold Byzantine beauty of St. Sophia, the sepulchral majesty of the old mosque of Sulimaniah with its Mihrab crowned by a window of jewelled glass that might have looked through into Paradise, the fairy-like Blue Mosque with its pathetic memories of the fair Roxellane, the prismatic labyrinth of the Bazaar where one could peer, and pry, and dream the hours away, the blue and golden glory of the Bosphorus under a brilliant sunshine. All this, later, I was to know, but now in mid-January, with Goethe I cried: "More light!" My soul was sick for the sun. In the sun I would console myself for the loss of my feathered pet. The quickest route to the sun was due south—not to say the only route the local authorities would let me take—by Asia Minor, a route that everyone tried so strongly to dissuade me from taking that I promptly took it.

It is always rather a tragic thing when one's first impression of a beautiful place is made under inauspicious circumstances. It is like first meeting a beautiful woman before she has made her toilet. The glamour is gone before it ever existed. So I shall always regret that my first impression of Constantinople is of lying awake with stone-cold feet, cursing

ASIA MINOR



CHAPTER I

ANGORA

It was on a record cold morning at the end of January that I started for Anatolia, and without enthusiasm I watched the rosy foreglow of the sunrise over the Bosphorus, as I drove down to Galata. Shivering and hunched up on the ferry boat to the Haida Pasha Station at Scutari, I meditated on the deplorable influence of the circulation on some human organisms. As long as my feet and my nose are warm I flatter myself that I can meet the vicissitudes of life, can endure hunger and thirst and hardship, and even a modicum of danger, with a fair degree of philosophy and stoicism, with cheerfulness even ; but when my circulation has let me down, when I am cold to the marrow, and pinched and blue, looking forty and feeling a hundred, I become a pitiable object, abject and mummified, without initiative or courage, of a Scrooge-like pessimism.

But touching the journey to Angora at any rate the gloomy prophecies of Constantinople proved as unfounded as are usually those of people who do not move outside their four-mile radius. The train was well warmed, and I had an excellent wagon-lit to myself. All morning we ran leisurely along the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Marmora, through cultivated vegetable land, and groves of olives, and orchards of apples, that in the fruit season are a blaze of crimson and gold. The cloudless sky turned the Gulf of Ismid to a deep blue, studded with the Islands of the Princes that looked in the cold shimmering sunlight like fairy isles. Beyond the summit of Mount Olympus was powdered with thin snow.

But there was no wagon restaurant, and breakfastless and without tangible prospect of lunch I listened hungrily to the occupants of the other compartments unpacking delicious crackling parcels, and popping corks and the maddening aromas of sausage and cold chicken taunted my nostrils. But by the goodness of Allah, when I had reached the famine line, our train halted for half an hour at Ismid, and I joined the mass formation of the "seconds" and "thirds" in their rush for the buffet. Knowing no Turkish, I just ate what happened, which was a thick slimy white soup, some very tough mutton, and a hunk of unfamiliar, but deliciously doughy cake, soaked in melted sugar, that lay stationary and heavily on me for the rest of the afternoon.

We had left the Sea of Marmora and were running through high hills along a big lake in whose still waters the mountains and low forests were reflected as in a mirror. All the hills were tipped with snow, that as the sun set, turned from pale pink to rose red, and the air was frostily clear. That afternoon made me acquainted with a very amiable Turkish gentleman in the next compartment, a wealthy scent merchant of Constantinople, who fed me most succulently at sundown on caviare and chicken and *raki*, and to whose subsequent kindness and assistance I owed a great deal of the pleasure of my visit to Angora.

As we went along the train slowed down and cautiously picked its way across rickety little trestle bridges, for the original bridges had been broken up during the Greek invasion that spread all over the north-western part of Anatolia. Concerning the rights and wrongs of that invasion, one came to hear as many opinions as there were nationalities in Turkey. It started a short time after the Treaty of Moudros, with its twenty-five clauses, had been signed by Admiral Arthur Calthorpe, Hussein Raouf Bey, and others, for Greece coveted Thrace, Smyrna, Trebizond, Adana, and a variety of pleasant and profitable places,

and twisted Article 7 of the Treaty, that which dealt with the rights of the Allies "to occupy any strategic point of security menaced," to suit her own purpose. Greek troops landed in Smyrna on May 15th, 1919, killing and pillaging as they went. Kiassin Bey took responsibility for the Turkish resistance in spite of the tremors of those in Constantinople, who were in rather a quandary concerning that same Article 7, and there ensued the Battle of In Eunu and the Battle of Sakharia that lasted twenty-two days. It was not till late in 1922 that the Greek troops were hunted into the Aegean Sea, just a month after Sir Basil Zaharoff had founded his famous Anglo-Greek Bank at Smyrna. A few days later when the Turks had re-installed themselves at the latter place, it was set fire to by the Greeks and Armenians out of revenge.

Morning found us crossing a great desolate ragged plateau that runs up on a slow incline to the 2,000 foot elevation of Angora. We were going very slowly, for the line has never been properly repaired since the Greek invasion, and the rails instead of being their usual approximate thirty feet, were only one and a half or two yards in length. Outside it was freezing hard under a brilliant sun, and the visibility was abnormally keen. I shivered as I looked at the snow-covered mountains that lay between me and the sun of Syria. To stay our craving for breakfast we devoured chocolate till we felt rather sick. Later on, the train emerged from a frozen marsh whose feathery reed-heads looked like giant icicles, and at the end of a shallow defile, Angora, a big conglomeration of square buildings, all of one colour with the background, lay on the steep side of a hill wearing its tall ruined fortress like a crest.

Through the kindness of friends I was settled in Fresco's, the only decent hotel in Angora, in a room from which one of the staff had been ejected to make place for me, and after a solid breakfast was taken

on a tour of inspection by a German publisher, a very courteous and learned gentleman visiting Angora on business.

At first sight Angora, considering it is the capital of the new Turkish Republic, is not imposing. There are three principal streets, one of which is irreverently nicknamed by the resident Germans, "Potzdammerplatz," irregular and roughly cobbled, and a labyrinth of smaller ones whose houses are two storied, and a trifle ramshackle, made of mud and bricks or plaster, interspersed here and there by a smart new Governmental edifice. The latter are wisely being constructed in the Oriental style, of smooth white plaster inlaid with blue faïence, something reminiscent of the houses of northern Morocco. Beyond and above lies the "Bazaar" which is much like any little Arab town of North Africa, with the same little cubby holes for shops, showing the same squirrel-like collections of oddments, of sun-tanned skins, embroidered saddlery, sticky sweetmeats, ancient groceries, and an astounding quantity of sock suspenders and braces. Near by is a small open space where lodge the camel caravans from the south. The camels are fine powerful beasts, with thick furry coats befitting the climate. All these streets swarm with every kind of folk dressed in every kind of oddly assorted clothing, from smart Turks in London-cut suits, fur-lined overcoats, and red Fez or Kalpuk of black, grey or brown Astrakan or sheepskin, to ragged peasants in parti-coloured clothing. Every other pedestrian is a soldier of a rather Germanic smartness. There are many Germans—four hundred of them I believe—in Angora, who to the apprehension of many Turks are taking a firm hold on all the trade and good appointments, a sprinkling of Serbs and Russians and Italians and many Jews. The colouring of the Anatolian lower orders is darker than that of Constantinople, and they are rather more definitely Oriental in feature. There is nothing very distinctive about their costume, which for the most

part is distressingly half-and-half, though some of the poorer women wear rather an amusing kit, consisting of a pair of very baggy trousers, clipped in at the ankles, of a vividly patterned material rather like a furniture cretonne, surmounted by a patched apron, and gaudy handkerchief binding the head. These do not as a rule veil their faces, though sometimes they will pull a corner of their head-dress across their chins at sight of a man, and especially of a foreigner. Owing to the jealous seclusion in which the upper and middle-class men of Angora keep their women-folk one sees little of the latter, though occasionally when some wedding procession parades the streets in ramshackle cabs, one gets a glimpse of handsome garments of purple and blue and red silk, and of heavy black veils that betray nothing of the charms they cover.

It is now several years since the Turks decided that Constantinople, as then situated, was too exposed to foreign invasion or bombardment for security as a capital, and transferred the seat of Government to Angora. This position she holds for another three years for certain, and will probably retain indefinitely. Great plans have been formulated for her improvement and embellishment, for the construction of good roads, and adequate offices and houses for the officials, soldiery, etc. But money is lacking, and the aforesaid plans hang fire. Besides, too, the Turk has more than a tincture of the "Allah will provide" attitude of all his co-religionists, and great piles of hewn stones lay, as they have lain for many months, waiting to pave the mountainously bumpy streets. A visitor to Angora told me that for the sake of his liver he always drove instead of walking as he got so much more exercise bumping over the cobbles than he did on foot.

The seats of the mighty are gathered together at Tchankaia-Keuchkin some seventeen kilometres from Angora; the palace of Mustapha Kemal, the Russian, German, and other Embassies. Appointment to

Angora is not popular, and everyone who can gets a transfer to Constantinople. In summer it is shadeless and burning hot under a smothering dust, in winter it is bitterly cold ; when it rains, the mud is ankle deep. There is little social life owing to the remarkable scarcity of women, there are no public distractions, except a mediocre cinema, and an occasional concert by Mustapha Kemal Pasha's instrumental band.

To the visitor, Angora wears a picturesque air. The first record of her is as a capital of the Tectosages, a Gaulish tribe, and she passed successively through the hands of the Persians, the Arabs, the Seljuk Turks, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks, and the Egyptians. The old Roman fortress is her outstanding external feature. Towering on the very apex of the hill on which the town stands, it silhouettes sharply against the sky from every angle ; whichever way you walk you seem to meet it face to face, frowning at you, you cannot take a photograph of anything without its showing. It is reached by devious winding paths, and its stones that, crumbling from their foundations, have rolled downhill, have been gathered up and built into tiny troglodytic dwellings, extremely primitive, that are inhabited by what the white residents call Tziganes, apparently a species of stationary gipsy of unknown origin, whose children swarm like rabbits in and out of the ruins, dressed in rags and tags of clothing, begging shamelessly. To the right it slopes down a gentle incline, with the remains of three defending walls now partially covered with a series of Mussulman cemeteries of the universal pattern. It is from the site of the fort that in 1402 Tamerlane is said to have stood and watched the great battle that raged in the plain below in which the Turkish Sultan Bayerzid was defeated. All round beyond the plain lies a wide panorama of interminable ranges of snowy mountains ; away to the right, half-way down the hill stands a little white mosque that holds many of the treasures brought from Constantinople before the occupation.

In truth its old masters of divers nations, must have found the fort of Angora a tower of defence, and almost impregnable in those days before big guns were conceived. On one side there falls an almost sheer incline, with scarcely the foothold for a cat, to a deep ravine below where a little river flows, when I saw it, bubbling weakly through cracks in the thick ice that covered it. Looking up at the fortress from below, at the evening hour, it seems to cry a stark defiance at the ages, and at the puny generations of men it has served and protected. It is constructed of great roughly hewn grey stones without cement. Its later masters seem to have had a keener sense of utility than of artistic or architectural suitability. Stuck all anyhow in the grey walls are fragments of the old Roman masonry; sometimes a broken column juts out unexpectedly, or a beautiful bas-relief lies upside down or on its side, reminding one of "The glory that was Rome"; in the courtyards of the little houses graceful urns are made to serve all sorts of prosaic purposes. Here and there are relics of an even older and a much more rudimentary art, of which no one seems to know the origin, for archaeology has made few disciples in Angora. Down in the ravine in a little back-water of the river where the girls and women come to wash their clothes, muddy but undaunted, sits the sweetest little lion imaginable, his age-old face carved in a childish and most beatific smile. He is supposed to have rolled down from the summit of the mountain, and nobody can say who were his ancestors, and very few Angorites even know of his existence, but I used to make a daily detour to look at him, and wonder, as sometimes I have wondered before the portrait of La Gioconda, what his smile meant and what memories it concealed.

A small museum near the fort has made a collection of ancient curios, but Roman remains, as I have said, lie thick as leaves of Vallombrosa all over Angora.

At the end of one short street stands the mosque of Hadji Bairam, a little dream sanctuary with its slim white minaret and old grey porch giving on to a tiny shadowy cemetery. Inside it is dim and lofty, walled with blue and white faience and strewn with rich carpets. Cheek by jowl with it is a sheer bit of old Rome, the ruined temple of Augustus, with a beautifully carved archway, some broken columns, and walls inscribed with what is believed to be the last will and testament of the Emperor Augustin himself. I will take my informant's word for it, for all I could decipher was : " R.E.R.V.M.G.E.S.T.A.R.U.M.—D.M.I.—A.U.G.U.S.T.I." and even that conveys little to me. On the higher ledges of the masonry a family of storks, no respecters of persons, have built themselves a row of ragged nests.

They are wonderfully impressive, these relics of a dead civilization. Everywhere one finds them, in Morocco on mountain tops, the gigantic pillars of whose temples were rolled almost 2,000 miles by the bare hands of myriads of dusky slaves, in little islands of the Mediterranean, whose inhabitants still retain some trace of the fine features of their conquerors, way down in the Sahara, half covered by burning sand. They are rather sad, these relics, but yet impressive in the lesson that they teach of the deathlessness of real greatness and beauty.

I had heard much ill spoken of the climate of Angora, but I think unjustly. Surrounded by snow-covered hills it is cold in winter with the still bracing dry cold of Switzerland ; but throughout my visit there was no breath of wind and the sun shone brilliantly, though at nights the thermometer fell far below zero, and never did I feel the withered shivering object of pity that I did in Constantinople. One day, snow fell heavily, and the world looked like a Christmas card, and the distant hills took on an almost unearthly beauty.

I spent five days at Angora, and was never-endingly

entertained and interested. There is practically no society in the usual sense of the word. The women of Angora have not been granted the freedom and emancipation of their sisters in Constantinople. They pass their lives among themselves in their own and each other's houses ; scarcely ever does one see them in the streets and never in a café or a cinema. The manager of my hotel told me that he had tried his hardest to inaugurate a *Thé Dansant* in the hopes that his patrons would come and bring their wives, but the former came alone so the *Thé Dansant* as a *Thé Dansant* missed fire !

But the segregation to which Turkish women are subjected does not seem to weigh too heavily on them. I speak, of course, of the women of the lower and middle classes, such as one meets travelling, and not of the fashionable and highly educated ladies of Constantinople, who, as in big cities the world over, have outgrown their national characteristics. The average Turkish woman is still at heart an Oriental. Conversation with her brings one up against the point of view of a pretty little lady who once asked me in a train why I had travelled and why I wrote books. In my reply, which I tried to make as comprehensive and comprehensible as possible, she caught at the one word "Liberty."

"Oh yes, it is good to have liberty," she said, "to be able to dance, and go to the theatre and cinema."

It was obviously impossible to make her understand the nomad's love of the road, and, still less, the creative instinct of the writer, so I contented myself by saying :

"Oh well, it is nice to make money."

"Money?" she queried. "But why then did you marry?"

"Why not?"

"But it is for a husband to make money, not a woman."

"But perhaps one likes to make more, to have it for one's very own."

She shook her head scornfully.

"Of what use is a husband if he cannot give his wife plenty of money, but plenty, so that she can have beautiful *toilettes*, and go much to the theatres and shops and to many receptions, and to care for her looks. That is the pleasantest life for a woman. I would not marry if I had to work."

"But I work, that is to say, I write books, and I travel, because I *like* to do so. One can't go to parties all the time, or sit about and do nothing."

"Why not? You are young and rather pretty. What else do you want?" I gave up trying to make her understand. She looked me over.

"You travel and you work. That is why you are thin," she remarked.

How many times have I heard this point of view from brown women in all parts of the world! And now it came again from the lips of a little lady about three shades fairer than myself. I wonder if Eve expressed the same point of view in the Garden of Eden at moments when she was cross with Adam, or whether there really is a great gulf fixed between feminine East and West.

Of the fashionable lady of Constantinople I have little knowledge, except to admire her as she walks about the streets. That is to say, I have admired her with reservations, for though far from agreeing with Mark Twain's verdict, I fall short also of that of Pierre Loti. I think, though I say it with timidity, that she has made a mistake in discarding the undoubted allurements of the veil. Sometimes she is lovely of feature, but more often her beauty lies solely in her eyes. Almost always her eyes are fine, long, luminous and liquid, their expressiveness cunningly enhanced by heavily applied *kohl*. Not content with the natural olive of her skin she overlays it with pink and white make-up which, in my humble opinion,

breaks the type and spoils her. She has something of the Arab type, with an added subtlety and mobility, but she lacks the slim vital lines of the Arab woman and the small extremities and the tapering feet and ankles. In the provinces the Turkish woman's clothes do not help her, especially the shapelessness of the dark, usually black garment, half hood, half cloak, that she wears in the streets, which is neither Oriental nor European in its conception. The upper-class woman of Constantinople is expensively and richly dressed in Parisian fashions of the last moment, eminently smart and effective, though lacking in the subtle distinction of the Parisienne. The clothes of every country, till its people lose their natural sense of fitness, best suit it. The emancipated Turkish woman with her cosmopolitan life and training could possibly dress in none but a European style, but, judging by æsthetic standards, I cannot help thinking that in adopting complete European dress, she has lost some of her distinctiveness, the hint of mystery and elusiveness, born of her Oriental origin, that was one of her chiefest charms.

The Turk, except the cosmopolitanized article of Constantinople, makes a jealous husband. His wife returns this jealousy in full measure, and will make a scene on any or no grounds. One evening in Angora I was dining with two men friends at my hotel, and it happened that a third friend at the next table had a couple of guests for dinner, highly placed officials of Angora. One of them chanced to express a wish to meet me, but the other demurred. When asked the reason he confessed after an embarrassed hesitation that should his wife chance to hear that he had been sitting with a lady in the café, even though he were one of a company of six, he would not hear the end of it for a week.

But though, as I have said, woman plays a silent rôle in Turkish life, there is at any rate one woman who has taken an active part in the political rebirth

of her country, whose voice cries with perhaps a more powerful note than that of any woman in our emancipated north. She is Halide Edib Hanoum, a talented writer and journalist, who, long before the war, wrote her dreams of a Turkey reborn. She was at the head of the then new literary movement, and was a considerable influence not only in the world of pen and ink, but of politics. In 1918 she left Constantinople and after a journey of almost incredible difficulty reached Angora, where for some time she worked for the Government. But this did not suffice her, and she went to the battle front and joined up as a trooper in a fighting unit, in which she eventually earned the rank of corporal in the big battle of Sakharia. I am told that she was adored by the regiment, both by officers and men. She has now gone back to Constantinople to her political and literary work in the interests of the Anatolia that she loves so well.

A chapter on Angora would be incomplete without at least a paragraph devoted to the Fresco Hotel, which is run by the Angora Millibachtche Society. "Fresco's" is the nucleus of social life in Angora. It boasts five or six bedrooms only, and its exterior is of the humblest, but in its enormous café, where the food and drink are excellent, all Angora—the masculine of it *bien entendu*—comes to discuss its business, and swop its gossip to the accompaniment of a good Russian band. It is a cosmopolitan spot. The Turk of the new regime, as indeed are most of his co-religionists, is extremely democratic. The society of a town like Angora is like a big family. There is little or no diversity of tastes or interests, everyone enjoys himself in the same way, and a Cabinet Minister has no objection to being seen amusing himself by his cook or his coachman in the same manner as they, and in the same surroundings.

One has but to sit in the Fresco Café and watch the life of Angora flow past, seat itself at little tables, and sip its *petit verre*. It speaks in a variety of tongues,

and each and every unit seems to have an axe to grind, something to sell to somebody else. Even did I stumble against two compatriots neither of whom had I met for many years. But before long Fresco's will lose its character. A real hotel is in process of being built on an ambitious scale, and when there is comfort, tourists will come, and distinguished visitors, and Angora perhaps will be a miniature Constantinople.

Only one other woman besides myself ever entered Fresco's, a lady chiefly distinguished by her bulk, her expensive fur coat, and her rasping voice. The latter I knew to my cost, for she—so cosmopolitan that she had forgotten her own origin, but believed to be Hungarian—occupied the next room to mine with her long-suffering Italian husband. The bedroom accommodation at Fresco's is simple, and the smallest action of one's neighbour is audible, and often visible, so that I can bear grudging testimony to the domestic cyclones they indulged in, all night as well as all day, during which most of her "past"—one of the longest and most lurid I have ever heard—was shouted to the house-tops. We all knew that her "strength was as the strength of ten" when it came to knocking her husband about, even if the rest of the quotation didn't fit, but at last one day, the poor man, utterly distraught, gave her a black eye. And not too soon, said Angora! And then the management intervened, and I and the rest of the hotel got some sleep o' nights!

There was one figure in the cheerful crowd that made Fresco's hum like a beehive, who struck a note of tragedy, and reminded one poignantly of the cruelty of the old regime of Orientalism. He was chief dragoman to a foreign Minister, a youngish man with a handsome intelligent head, and a body that must once have been powerful and well built, but that, when I saw him, was bent almost double, so that his head thrust forward, was but four feet, or thereabouts,

from the ground. He was the son, it appeared, of a highly born Pasha, but some years ago, falling under the displeasure of Abdul Hamid, he was, by order of the latter, imprisoned and bound up with cords for four long years, till he became permanently deformed and distorted.

As one of the first European women to visit Angora I was naturally an object of the keenest curiosity.

As a friend said to me : "*Tout le monde se casse la tête, madame, pour savoir ce que vous faites ici.*" But the Turk is one of the most courteous men in the world, and though the same curiosity followed me throughout my journey across Anatolia, it was rarely obtrusively expressed, and nowhere was I stared out of countenance, or annoyed by small impertinences, as I have so often been in other countries. Long since, I have learnt that my profession is my best passport and explanation in countries where a solitary female travelling is a thing almost against nature, and like King Charles's head, I conscientiously trot it out on the first possible occasion. "*Ecrivain*" does pretty well, but is too vague. "*Journaliste*" says everything, and apparently guarantees my respectability in spite of every appearance to the contrary. Once even as I sat at tea-time in a Turkish café writing merely, if the truth were known, a pleading request to my long-suffering Bank, for more money, the orchestra sent across to ask if it was disturbing me !

Sometimes I used to take my meals in the little restaurants with which the town abounds, sampling local dishes. Sometimes one was pleasantly surprised, sometimes the reverse. There was one dish called *cheeskobab*, composed of small lumps of meat swimming in sour cream, which, after the first shock, was not as bad as it sounds ; here was another looking like *petit fours* and tasting like sausage, that was excellent. Most Turkish dishes seem to contain sour milk as their chief ingredient, a taste which grows on one, though I couldn't train my palate to *yaourte*

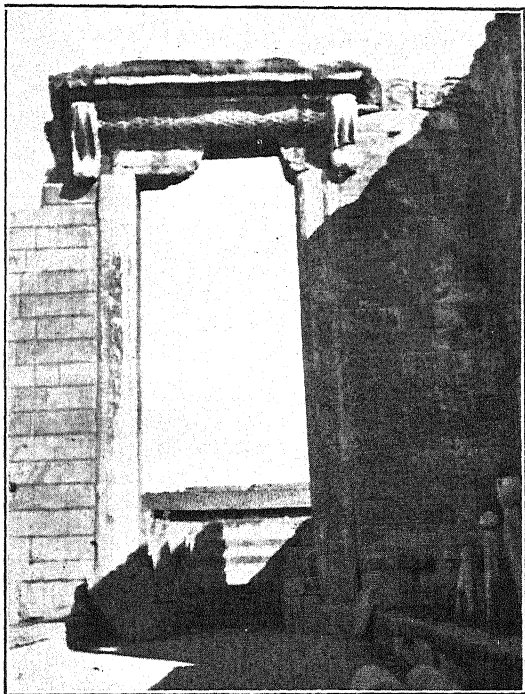
which seems one of the most popular sweets of all. *Halebe* is delicious, a glutinous compound of almonds, and sugar and sesame. In general the Turk having a sweet tooth, excels in sugary dishes, and at Constantinople I could not help smiling at the sight of parties of dignified middle-aged Turks sitting in the numerous confectioners, gobbling little creamy cakes. Every other building in a Turkish town seems to be a café if it isn't a restaurant, choc-a-bloc at any moment of the day with bland dignified Turks puffing at long nargilehs. And always they sit with their hats on, for it is considered bad form, not actually bad manners, to remove the fez or kalpuk in the presence of equals or superiors. A propos of the latter, in Angora one sees many kalpuks of the new style, pulled out broadways on either side, made fashionable by the Ghazi. To wear such a kalpuk is supposed to show that a man is a Kemalite, but I am not sure that as a token it is always quite sincere.

Speaking of head adornment I was surprised to notice that scarcely a single Turk of whatever age wears a beard, for under the old regime, a man, however young, was considered without honour or dignity until he had achieved a chin covering. What connection there is between democracy and hirsute adornment I cannot imagine, but I was gravely assured that "Democrats do not wear beards." And the fact remains that nine out of ten Turks are as clean shaven as Americans.

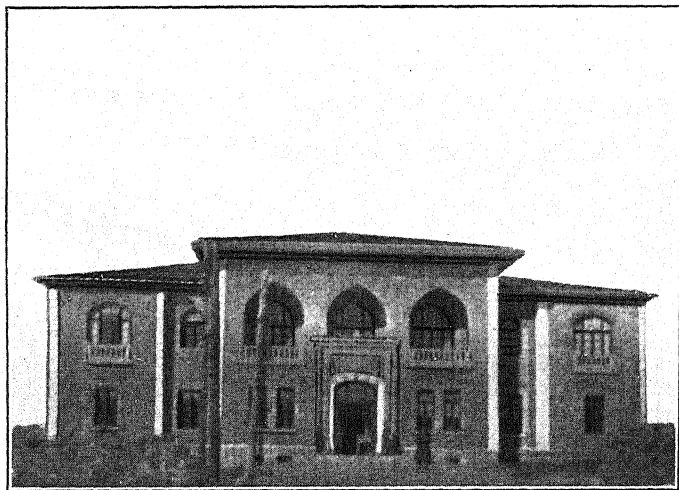
One day, feeling an uncontrollable desire for a bath of some kind I went to the Hammam, strictly enjoining on the friend who escorted me there to interpret to the attendant the fact that, though a most gregarious creature on most occasions, I was very Diogenes when it came to my bath, and that I was to be left to clean myself alone. I undressed in company with half a score of other ladies—who, in parenthesis, I may say had the very worst figures I have ever seen in my life—and unobtrusively took

possession of the washing-room. Having scrubbed myself nicely clean I tried to sneak sloppily back to the drying-room. But my luck was out, for the attendant, a large muscular lady, catching sight of me, seized me firmly by the shoulders, pushed me back, and tearing off my covering towel proceeded by brute force to wash me according to her own ideas. First of all she nearly drowned me with a long hose, then she removed most of my skin with a hard brush, and nearly asphyxiated me with soap. She made me pick up my feet one by one like a horse while she curry-combed my legs, she made me crouch like a monkey while she punished my back, then she removed the rest of my skin with a loofah. When I was as pink all over as a curried prawn she looked at me with faint approval, and, adding insult to injury, suggested by signs that I should henna my hair as a number of other ladies were doing in the central hall. Followed by a last spurt of boiling water, I broke away from her, and was hailed by a bevy of women and girls who were crouching round a tiny fire of embers, roasting pea-nuts and eating little sweetmeats and who beckoned me to join them. I was the first European woman many of them had ever seen at close quarters, and if I am a fair representative there was nothing they didn't know about one by the time they had finished with me.

As happens so frequently in life I was totally unable while in Angora to locate the one thing for which the place is renowned to the bulk of ignorant humanity. I refer to cats. Angora cats are reputed to have unusually fine and silky coats and to have one blue eye and one green. Cats there are in Angora by the thousand, if not by the million, and I don't think I overlooked one of them. Most of them were miserably emaciated, stealthy and ragged, real area-sneak cats, savage and yet servile, in no way comparable to our sleek domestic mousers. Some of them had long fur, it is true, of a disreputable kind, but not one cat with



TEMPLE OF AUGUSTIN, ANGORA.



PARLIAMENT HOUSE, ANGORA.



variegated eyes did I see. I asked several well-informed Turks about it, but they were vague on the subject, saying they believed there were some such cats, but that they couldn't remember particularly noticing them. Touching their fur, it is said that there is something in the atmosphere of that part of Anatolia that makes for length and fineness in the coats of animals, even of dogs, and that is lost if the creatures are taken to a different country, and there is considerable export in the silky fur of the Angora goats from which mohair is made.

On the last day of my visit I was given a permit to attend the National Assembly or Parliament. The Assembly House, is a new and rather handsome building all white and blue, the first that strikes the eye on the way from the railway station. The debating-chamber is more like a concert room than anything else, white-walled, red-carpeted, with a ceiling ornamented with gold and blue arabesques, from which hangs a great crystal candelabra at the end of a golden chain. On one side is a big box of crimson and gold, the seat of the Ghazi.

From one of two small balconies on either side of the Forum I had a good view of the proceedings. There was seating room for about three hundred members, two by two at little desks, of which about a third that day were filled. The members ranged between immaculately tailored elegants, provincial members in boots and breeches, and a dozen or so grey-bearded gentlemen in white turbans and black flowing robes lined with fur, who were religious dignitaries. The subject of the day was finance, under the presidency of Kiassim Pasha, and was conducted with the same noisy enthusiasm as elsewhere. The annual budget, it appeared, was overdue, and trade in consequence held up. There was a crying need for the standardization of the system of weights and measures, and there was also need of a new law regulating the consumption of alcoholic drinks. Somebody raised

a laugh by saying that with the fines levied in the course of a year on drunkards, if such a fine existed, he could build a railway.

The latter assertion may seem curious in a Moham-medan country, and is in striking contrast to Africa where the Koranic law forbidding alcoholic beverages is rigidly kept. But wherever I went in Turkey I noticed that everyone drank anything that seemed good to them, from beer to liqueur brandy, and in particular their beloved *raki*, a spirit made from the juice of grapes flavoured with aniseed. In this, as in the matter of prayer, the Turks of the cities though believing are not "practising." I do not remember once seeing a Turk prostrate himself in prayer at the five accepted periods of the day.

The Missaak Millié, settled by Mustapha Kemal Pasha on August 7th, 1919, marked the end of the old Ottoman Empire, and the birth of new Turkey, of the "Government of the Grand National Assembly." The administrative system claims to aim at "the greatest possible decentralization combined with the completest autonomy compatible with the main interest of the state." It claims no right to make war except in self-defence, and its explanation of the "strafe" against the Greeks was conveniently alleged to be for the liberation of the invaded territory. The Grand National Assembly holds its elections every two years, but members are open to re-election.

To my great regret I did not have the pleasure of meeting the Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who was away on a Mission in the south. The very inspiration and life of new Turkey, he must from all accounts be a man of amazingly powerful personality. Still in the early forties his life has been more crowded and varied than that of most men twice his age. A native of Eastern Roumelia, son of a hard-up petty functionary of customs, he spent his childhood in Salonika, where his brilliant gifts won honours and distinctions at the secondary school where he was educated, and where

he dreamed all the while of military glory. Eventually with the help of a monetary prize he entered the School for Officers at Harbié. Before long his influence was deemed a menace by the adherents of Abdul Hamid, and he was sent to Damascus where he founded the League of Liberty in 1902. Again he was exiled to Jaffa, but escaped home to Salonika where through the influence of friends he was finally pardoned and his grade and honours restored to him. From 1908 to 1910 under Mahmoud Chevkett he took an active part in the Turkish Revolution, and later, after a brief sojourn in France, was, with Fethi Bey and Envers Bey, one of the chief figures in the Turco-Italian war in Tripoli, and later still of the war in the Balkans. But Envers Bey saw in him a dangerous rival, and he was made Military Attaché at Sofia, until the Great War brought him back to the Dardanelles, with what success we English know to our cost. But the intrigues of his rivals sent him to the Caucasus where he was charged with the mission of neutralizing British action in Kurdistan. Later on in Palestine with Falkenheim he learnt to disagree with German tactics, and in 1917 he predicted the death of the old Ottoman Empire, and the victory of the Allies, which did not, however, prevent him from holding out tooth and nail against Allenby's Palestine campaign. Now he is a God to his followers, that is to say to most of the new Turkey, and though his position is nominally but that of President, his power is that of Dictator.

Undoubtedly a very brilliant man; but even a cursory glance at Turkey and its conditions makes one wonder if he is not a trifle over-inclined, to quote American slang, "to hitch his waggon to a star." Commerce makes the strength of nations in these days, and he seems inclined to think and to act in terms of patriotism and not of commerce. "Turkey and things Turkish for the Turks" is an admirable motto, but as I have said, the Turk is, or at any rate has always shown himself, a man of war and not of

peace. Having won a country he seems to think it can run itself. In the case of the Armenians and the Greeks, and other commercial races who made so much prosperity for Turkey, the Turk contented himself with casting them into the sea, instead of utilizing their gifts for trade, and turning them to his own profit. In his present position the Turk seems to be trying to run before he has learnt to walk alone. Trade dwindles at the ports, and there is no one to re-organize it. Everywhere one sees the traces of past prosperity with an accent on the past. While I was in Anatolia there was, and probably still is, an edict in force that the Turkish army must be clad only in material of Turkish manufacture. Either there was not enough plant to produce the material, or not enough money to produce the plant, I don't know which, but many of the troops in the country places were arrayed in the most haphazard collection of almost rags I have ever seen.

There must undoubtedly be two opinions also as to the wisdom of the recent abolition of the Medressas. In the Medressas which, as probably everyone knows, were run on the lines of the old Abbeys of England, the education was almost entirely theological, a study of the Koran and not much else. So much influence wielded by any one institution undoubtedly has its danger, and is in no wise conducive to progress, as has been proved in North Africa and other Moslem countries, but at any rate it inculcated decent principles and a belief in God. The Turks in the country regions of Anatolia are at an early stage of their development, and it is open to possibility that the elimination of organized religious teaching and beliefs, before their minds are more fully developed and their lay instruction more thorough, may lead to moral and social disorder and unrest. But these theories—for I will not in my ignorance presume to call them criticisms—are possibly but the vapourings born of a necessarily very superficial and premature study of what is certainly a fine race, with very fine ideals.

CHAPTER II

SOUTHERN ANATOLIA

WILD-goose feathers did not look so bad to me after an entertaining and amusing week in Angora, but four days and nights' travelling still lay before me and the Syrian sun. The journey seemed infinitely long and tedious as the little ramshackle train plodded slowly through uninteresting scenery deep under snow, and the train was a bad one and most imperfectly warmed. My chief cause for congratulation was that, as usual in this country, I preserved my compartment to myself. At all times the Turk seems to prefer the company of his own kind to that of Europeans when travelling, and with his views on the segregation of women I imagine he would consider it an infinite breach of manners, if not of decorum, to intrude himself on a solitary woman. I partook sparingly of my chicken and Vichy water, not knowing when I should have opportunity or command of language to obtain more sustenance in the course of the next three days.

At midnight we reached Eski Chehir, the general junction of Anatolia, that late in 1920 was attempted by the Greeks before they were beaten in the first battle of In Eunu, and thrown back upon Broussa. Except in the bigger towns of Anatolia, no railway official talks anything but his own tongue, and I had long since given up trying to make myself understood. Like Thomas à Becket, who made the journey from the Holy Land to England knowing but the word London, and the name of the maiden for whom his heart was aflame, I had learnt that I could travel quite efficiently by bleating the name of my projected

destination, leaving the Turks, who are a people of intelligence and initiative, to deal as they thought fit with my person and belongings.

In any case the more primitive the country, the easier it is to travel without a knowledge of the language. There is none of the complicated red tape of civilization. There is only one train per day, or per week, and only one place to go to, and everyone takes it for granted that you and your baggage are going by it, and to it. At the worst you have but to pick a nice spot in the sun and sit and wait till the next train comes in, and there are always plenty of people doing the same thing. Granting that the place is sufficiently primitive, that is ; for there is nothing so sordidly uncomfortable as the half-and-half conditions of travel in indifferent civilization. In the complete wilds, with one's own camp-bed, tent and cooking utensils one can achieve a very fair if simple degree of comfort. One can, within reasonable limits, choose one's own hours for eating or sleeping, and ensure that the quality of both be good. One can be clean and enjoy reasonable privacy and independence, and one's actions are bounded only by natural conditions. But the bad trains, uncertainties, dirt, smells, petty officialdom, and obstructionism that beset the traveller midway between civilization and nature takes, for the time being, most of the romance out of the nomad's road.

At Eski Chehir my method worked quite well ; indeed, instead of being permitted, as I wished, to roam about the station and commune with the crescent moon, I was carefully locked into a tiny waiting-room by the station-master himself, till at 2 a.m. I was let out and placed in the new train. Once indeed, when someone, coming in, left the door open for a moment, I made an escape, but I was soon caught by the station-master and his myrmidons, taking a breather on the platform, and by them hurroushed back into the waiting-room, like a small recalcitrant hen. I

suppose it was part and parcel of their accepted standard of procedure for lone females travelling.

Throughout that night and the following day I was much harassed concerning my passport. Every half-hour it seemed to me, a fresh military policeman boarded the train with a passionate desire to know and inscribe on a large sheet of paper every personal particular from and preceding the date of my birth. Here Thomas à Becket was of no use as a model and sometimes I was reduced to walking along the train and putting my head in at the various compartments to demand pathetically : "*Tous mes excuses, messieurs, mais y a-t-il quelqu'un qui parle ou le Français ou l'Allemand ?*" Sometimes there was an answer in the affirmative, and the policeman, pocketing his pencil with an air of relief, would depart satisfied.

That day we passed under the lee of the Djebel Sultan whose wild white outlines seemed cut out of the blue of the sky, but in spite of the deep snow we ploughed through the air seemed warmer, and no longer cut one's face like a knife. I was in no mood for scenery, for I had eaten all my chicken and drunk all my Vichy water, there was no food to be obtained at the innumerable little stations where we paused, hunger gnawed me like a wolf, a sleepless night and the jolting of the train had brought on a violent headache. In the afternoon we crossed a great salt desert, a desolate region where there was nothing to be seen but long caravans of camels, travelling to Angora and beyond with heavy loads of salt. At six-thirty we halted at Konia. Always I have been fated to pass Konia during the hours of darkness, so know nothing of its externals, except its rather inadequate feeding arrangements. I believe it is rather a lovely place from the point of view of scenery ; certainly it is interesting historically, and architecturally, with its relics of the old Persian ascendancy, and its Mosque containing the tomb of the mystic and poet Mevlana Jelal ed Din Rumi who founded the order of Mevlani,

or whirling Dervishes. Konia was the capital of the Seljuk Sultans and later was occupied by Barbarossa, and under the reign of Ala ed Din the First, was a caravanseri of Bokkaran and Persian artists, writers, poets, priests and dervishes, who took refuge there from the invasion of the Mongols, and made Konia a kaleidoscope of gaiety and splendour, till eventually she dwindled under the Turkish regime to her present rôle of junction on the ultimate Paris-Bagdad railway.

At Konia I made for a small buffet that lay a short distance from the station. While I was trying to explain to the proprietor that I wanted a meal, and not a suite of rooms as he seemed to think, a dapper little Turkish officer of artillery beckoned me to sit beside him. With his five words of French he interpreted my needs, and at the end of the meal, when I asked the amount of the bill, he explained by signs that it was paid. I signalled back my remonstrances and protests, but in vain. "Feeneesh," he remarked. It was his one word of English, and he repeated it with various gracious inflections as he saw me back to the train, and gravely bowed me to my compartment.

Followed another most uncomfortable night in which efforts to sleep proved more exhausting than frankly staying awake. Next morning we stopped at Yenidji, the meeting place of the French and Turkish railways. Turkish trains have an unnatural habit of usually arriving at any given place an hour or half an hour before the scheduled time, which it is as well to take into consideration unless one wants—as happened to me at Yenidji—to be plucked from one's compartment half-dressed, clutching sponge bag, hairpins, and other intimate impedimenta, to finish one's toilet on the station platform, accompanied by a flow of commentary from a keenly interested audience.

For no apparent reason we waited at Yenidji for three hours and a half, but the snow had disappeared,

and the sun shone warmly, and we spent it consuming Turkish coffee, and having our shoes shined at a primitive little open-air café, adjoining the station. Here I was taken in charge by another Turkish officer, a captain of artillery, who knew precisely ten words of French and three of English. Throughout the day he followed me. He would seat himself gravely opposite me and remain in silence for long minutes at a time, his face working spasmodically as that of a man in pain. Then would explode one or more words of his scant vocabulary, followed by a beaming smile, when he found that I had understood. Occasionally with grave courtesy he would offer me an orange. Travelling in Turkey is a leisurely affair, and by the end of the day we had learnt quite a lot about each other; our respective ages, names, existence or other of the marriage state, our views on the climate, politics, and cinemas of the various countries we had visited, and so on. Our method was simple. He would point to some near-by object, say a woman, and shoot out a word.

"Femme," I would add explanatorily.

"Ah, oui, femme . . . Constantinople beaucoup femmes, comme Europe." Here he would make a gesture with his hands, to show that the ladies of Constantinople went unveiled.

"Oui, beaucoup jolies femmes," from me.

"Londres beaucoup femmes?"

"Oui, beaucoup femmes."

"Londres jolies femmes," he would comment with a polite bow in my direction.

"Jolie" was our mutual word for everything that was agreeable, and by a natural sequence "pas jolie" for everything disagreeable, whether a woman, a camel, a train or a smell.

One soon acquires, when travelling in an unfamiliar country, a controlled expressiveness of face and gesture that would make one's fortune on the screen. I'm sure that, since travelling in the Near East, I can

give points to any movie star for the nice perfection with which I have learnt silently to register hunger, thirst, honied courtesies, profanity, inquiry, doubt, determination, and a variety of other emotions. Occasionally of course, one makes mistakes, as I did notably on one occasion when the proprietor of a wayside buffet, having watched me express a desire for the wherewithal to wash my hands and face, nodded understandingly and sent for a *nargileh*.

It was late on the third day when we reached Adana in the south-western corner of Anatolia. Here for the very good reason that no train ran south for another two days, I was obliged to alight, dirty, hungry and infinitely tired, for I had not been out of my clothes for nearly sixty hours. I presented myself at an hotel to which I had been recommended, and asked for a room. The proprietor, an Albanian, shook his head; there was no room. He looked me over appraisingly.

"*Vous êtes seule ?*" he asked in that infinitely mistrustful voice that always makes me want to multiply myself into six persons, into a crowd. I hurried through a brief synopsis of my past, present and future. He shook his head regretfully.

"*C'est malheureux !*" he said.

"But aren't there other hotels?" I asked. "What about the ——? or the ——?" Again he looked me over.

"You are, I take it, a respectable lady?" he asked with an air of grave detachment.

"Entirely so," I assured him with equal gravity.

"You are too good looking," he said. "You cannot go to the ——, or the ——"

"Why? What's the matter with them?"

"*Les militaires,*" he hissed ominously. "*Pas tranquille.*"

I was loth to give credence to such insinuations against the Turkish army, remembering my little Galahads in the train, but he was already giving

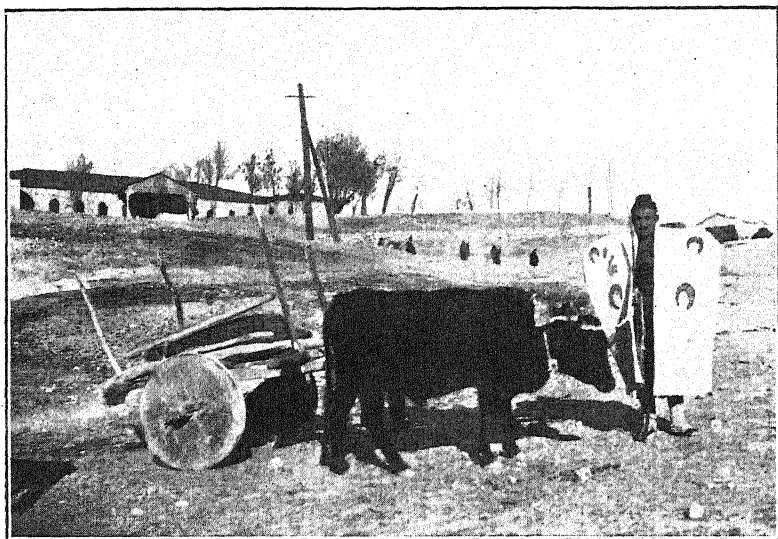
peremptory orders to my driver. Bucketing down bumpy streets we came to a ramshackle door where prolonged hammering produced two infinitely withered Greek crones, one of whom spoke French. I stated my case, and again came that ominous query :

"Vous êtes seule ?"

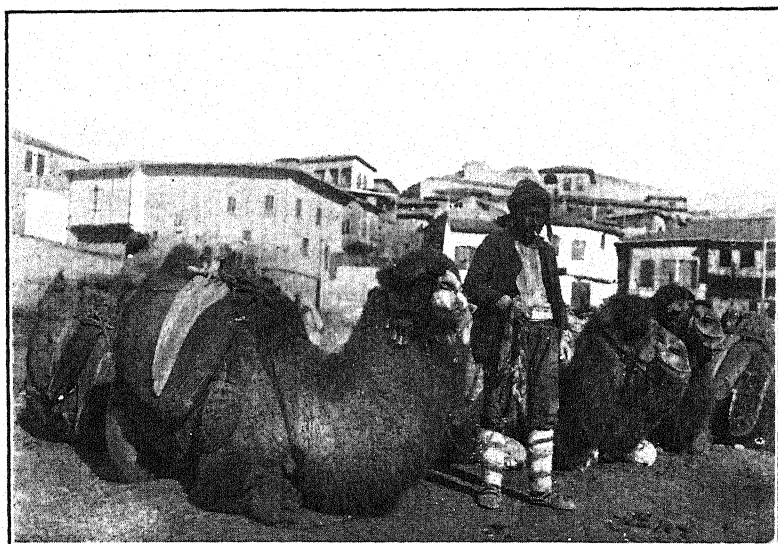
I amplified my case, I waved the word "journaliste" in front of them like a flag, ending up with the assertion that if I did not find a bed and some food soon I should die. Their faces mellowed.

"La pauvre," said one of them, patting me on the back, and assured me that not only could I have a room, but that though contrary to the custom of the house, she would cook me some eggs, and send out for a bottle of wine. I was thankful for the accommodation, though it was of the roughest, a cavernous hole of darkness, curtained off from the hall, and the two old ladies, though they looked like the witches of Macbeth, had hearts of gold. Indeed they fussed over me as if I were a lost child, and on my departure presented me with a large glutinous compound of sticky sweetmeats that they had made on purpose for me, an embarrassing gift for a traveller whose pockets were already bulging, and whose suit-cases required two strong men to make them shut. While my room was being prepared I took a brief walk and passing the —, and the — hotels, whence came light and warmth, and the cheerful sound of voices, I gazed at them with a wistful sneaking regret till I reminded myself that I was a "respectable lady," so respectable and so bored indeed that after a frugal supper of sardines and boiled eggs, I went to bed at seven o'clock and read the Koran. As I dropped off to sleep I was conscious that, though I had myself locked my door inside, my hostesses were bolting it also from the outside. I suppose some lingering element of caution urged them to reinforce the fact that I was really the "respectable lady" I made myself out.

Adana, barring the seaports, is the principal town of south-western Anatolia, and is very old. Part of it dates from the time of Justinian, and was restored under the name of Jisr al Waled in A.D. 743, and its castle, now ruined, was built a few years later by the great Haroun el Raschid. Its moment of greatest prosperity, after many vicissitudes, was in the days of the Romans when it was an important station on the military road to the east, rivalling Tarsus itself. As a strategic point it has always been a place of importance, and figured as such in the Turco-Egyptian War of 1832. It stands on the River Jihun, in the middle of a bare dusty plain, flanked in the distance by superb snow-covered mountains. Through the heart of those mountains, the Taurus, the little railway runs due east to Aintab, where it turns abruptly south to Aleppo. This same railway is part of the long-contemplated Constantinople to Bagdad line, for the construction of which Turkey granted a Concession to a Franco-German Syndicate in 1902. At present the line runs as far as Nissibin on the borders of Syria, about a hundred miles short of Mosul. Its route across the southern slopes of the Taurus is a dream of beauty. The train winds through deep valleys, past frowning black hills, capped by the ruins of old Turkish fortresses that each might have come out of some poem by Byron or Edgar Allan Poe, and across green sun-dappled plains studded with cobalt-blue lakes. The mountains, snow-topped, with indigo and purple reflections on their lower slopes, that turn to a fiery red under the glow of a rose and gold sunset, grow slowly lower and less rugged as one slides down towards the plains of Syria. At every little wayside station—and they are many, bearing their names now in French as well as in Turkish—a small sprinkling of dapper French officers, and sleek Levantines and hooded Arabs mingle with the extraordinarily picturesque Turks and Kurds of the mountains, dressed in baggy



BULLOCK CART OF ANATOLIA.



CAMEL STATION, ANATOLIA.



trousers and bright handkerchiefs, sturdy robust creatures with rugged bronzed faces.

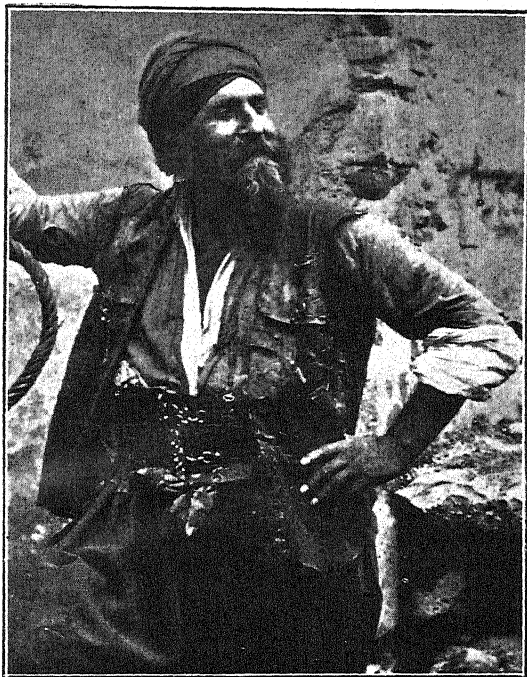
Adana is a large town, as that part of the world goes, and I believe it covers a wider area than Angora itself. But it has none of the cosmopolitanism of Angora, none of its ambitiously planned houses, and no trace of European influence. It is purely Oriental in atmosphere, with its jostling, rambling, roughly cobbled streets, vivid colouring, and variety of little dark shops, whose owners ply their trade under the indifferent gaze of passers-by. Also it is amazingly dirty, and when I was there quite terribly dusty, for there had been no rain for many weeks. The rains were late this winter, though the people looked hopefully at heavy clouds that rolled up from the horizon. One of its mosques is of really fine workmanship with an extraordinarily attractive inlaid of black and white stone, but unfortunately I could find no one to tell me its name or date of origin. Here as at Angora one noticed the indifference of the people to the call to prayer. The river Jihun flows outside the town, spanned by a great stone bridge of pre-Roman origin. On the outskirts, set in broader streets, are houses that have once been beautiful, but that now wear an air of dilapidation and decay. Formerly they belonged for the most part to rich Greek traders before that race was hunted out of Turkey, taking the prosperity of the place with them, and drastically reducing the population. These same Greeks laid out the outskirts of the town with shady walks and gardens overlooking the river, that are now desolate and neglected, if they are not used as dust heaps.

For the Turk from time immemorial has been a maker of war and not of peace, he has laid waste and destroyed, he has utilized that which he found a convenience, never thinking to keep it in repair, and when inevitably it has crumbled and fallen he has never troubled to replace it. So too, with the

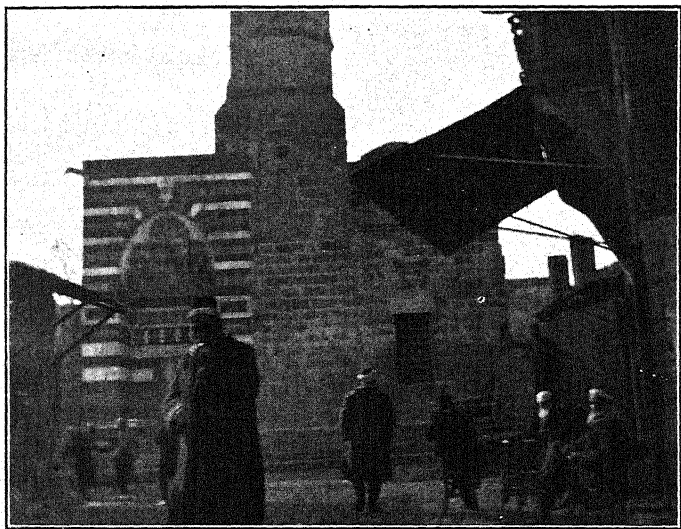
commerce of the countries he has taken possession of. Here at Adana the river Jihun flows deep and broad down to the Gulf of Alexandretta, but no efforts have been made since the days of the Greeks to use it as means of transport for the country's merchandise, as did those who went before. Were it properly exploited cotton might make the neighbourhood of Adana a very rich one. The natural quality is not so fine as the American article, and some of the more far-seeing Turks are beginning to ask that British experts should come both to help them improve the crop itself, and also to teach their traders how to classify and arrange it for exportation, so as to make it fit to enter into competition in the big markets of commerce with the cotton of other countries. At present it is packed and shipped higgledy-piggledy, with little or no attempt at classification, so that would-be purchasers, not knowing what they may be buying, pass over Turkish cotton in favour of more reliable brands.

Till a few years ago the French had a mandate on this part of Anatolia, at that time believed to be a permanency, and one can still see a few traces of their handiwork. Now those who had taken up their abode in Adana have moved down into Syria. Few, if any tourists pass that way, judging by the amount of public interest that my presence created. I could not stir a yard without a procession of thirty to a hundred persons following in my wake. However aloof and indifferent one may pretend to be one always feels rather foolish when heading a procession down a crowded street, especially when one cannot understand what the units of it are shouting to the passers-by!

I have painful memories of my next visit to Adana on the return journey a few months later. Turkey was then in the throes of a guerilla war with the Kurds, and railroad traffic was dislocated and congested. Adana being the nearest point of importance to



A KURD OF ANATOLIA.



A MOSQUE IN ADANA.



Diarbekr, the centre of activities, was packed to bursting point with soldiers. For two hours late one evening I searched for accommodation. None of the hotels or recognized lodgings could take me in; even my fatherly friend at the "Bourse" could not help me. It was after dark, the crowds in the streets were growing unrestrained in their insolence, and I was sorely perplexed by the time my driver stopped in front of a dark ominous-looking door. I stumbled up a steep flight of steps through a sickening aroma of drains, garlic and lamp oil, and found myself in what, in English slums, is called I believe, a "doss-house," where over a wide floor space were ranged rows upon rows of rough mattresses upon which men snored in various stages of undress. Only a few mangled but welcome words of English addressed me by the shirt-sleeved proprietor stayed my flight. A short colloquy divulged the fact that he had a whole room unoccupied, a superior room designed for those sybarites who demanded real beds to sleep in. It contained ten beds, all vacant. To cut a long story short I rented all ten, plus sole rights over the floor space and a door that didn't lock, and in ten minutes was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion in the cleanest looking of the ten beds. Alas, for the futility of human hopes! In another ten minutes I had awakened with a sensation as of red hot needles all over my body. I flashed on my electric torch and threw back the bed-clothes. Over the results of my inspection I will draw a polite veil. Sufficient is it to say that I spent the remainder of a miserable night on the solitary wooden chair, my feet propped on my kit bag alternately smoking cigarettes and scratching myself!

Owing to the existing state of warfare the red tape of Turkey had tied itself into even more complicated knots during my absence, and the next day was occupied with dark rites connected with my passport. Some autograph or photograph hunter will, after a lapse of years, be able to have a fine field-day among

the archives of Anatolia. At least a score of my own unimportant contributions adorn the police stations between the Bosphorus and Syria.

The one distraction of that day was the declaration of Bairam, the longed-for day, or rather three days, that mark the end of grey Rhamadan, when men must fast from dawn to sunset, beginning as the Koran words it "when the new moon was actually seen and lasts until sight of the next new moon, to extend each day from the time when a white thread could be distinguished from a black one, and until night fall ; to be absolute in all the time as to food, drink and women." It is a fast counted as one of the five pillars of Islam, and that virtually speaking, and with great inconvenience to the stranger, turns night into day.

As an aftermath of this infelicitous month comes Bairam ed al Fitr " Festival of Fast Breaking," called by the Turks Kutshuk Bairam " Lesser Bairam." Though the lesser of the two great Mohammedan feasts, it is perhaps the most outwardly joyous, and is held during the first three days of the tenth month, Shauwal. It is more social than Greater Bairam, and is celebrated by official and private visiting, congratulations and presents, grave visiting, and new clothes.

Here in Adana no one had been expecting Bairam until the morrow. But in the middle of the morning two old tired men mounted on apparently older and yet more tired mules, dragged themselves into the town from the mountains over twenty miles away, declaring that beyond doubt they had seen in the small hours the wee slender crescent of the new moon. Whereupon Adana gave itself up to joy, to re-doubled joy that is, for already it was in fête for the birthday of the new Republic, and every street was hung with the brave gay flag of Turkey. Later in the day there would probably be " rough-housing " and gun-firing. For the moment the more youthful of the population contented itself with stone-throwing, and one small

boy made a very neat welt on my right shin with a catapult as I drove past in a cab. But that was done merely from excess of *joie de vivre*; it was not the only stone thrown at me that day and they were not all so well meant. At the best Adana has a reputation for its unfriendly treatment of strangers. Dislike of foreigners and things foreign is taught to the children in the schools irrespective of reason or individual, nationalities, and such few European women, mostly French, whose husbands' work compels them to live in Adana, avoid unpleasantness by refraining from appearing outside the residential suburbs of the town.

Adana, in short, is not a place whose memory I cherish, and it was with relief, at the end of both my visits there, that I once more caught the rare train of Anatolia.

CHAPTER III

A DRAMA OF THE TAURUS

I MUST be forgiven if I do not mention names and localities in writing of the queer incomplete little drama that I stumbled across in the wilds of Asia Minor. So many of its ramifications are and ever will be unknown to me, and I am afraid of getting myself and other people into trouble.

It happened during my trip south from Constantinople while I looked for a quiet spot in which to finish some work I was engaged on. Circumstances over which I had no control obliged me to alight at a junction that I will call X, a little town to the last degree uninteresting and I soon found that the best place in which to wile away the empty days was in a little semi-Kurdish village high up one of the mountain sides.

I found hospitality in the tiny stone cottage of some rough but kindly Kurdish peasants who evidently considered me pleasantly and harmlessly mad and allowed me to run in and out as I pleased, to rest and take my meals there when the weather was inclement. The little living-room looked out on to some of the most beautiful scenery in the world—rugged black towering mountains, snow-capped, bathed in frosty sunshine; down in the sombre valleys below loomed the ruins of infinitely old Turkish fortresses. The tiny village, perched like an eagle on the rocky mountain side was accessible from above and below by steep winding mule-paths, and there was not another human habitation within many miles. Many hours I spent astride an old lop-eared mule called Mustapha who could climb like a cat, wandering over the valleys and mountain sides, exploring odd

nooks and crannies and breathing in the marvellous air.

The first evening after dusk I had noticed, 'way up the mountain above us, a tiny pin-point of light, but when I questioned my friends about it they seemed slightly embarrassed and, saying that it was probably the light of some belated shepherd, seemed anxious to change the conversation.

Next afternoon, when I had ridden right up to the barren snow-line I noticed a storm brewing over the valley, and turned the head of Mustapha towards home. I was riding absent-mindedly, absorbed in the gorgeous scenery and letting Mustapha pick his own way. Suddenly I was aware that he had stopped and was cropping happily at some green herbage. Something about the richness and luxuriance of the green stuff caught my attention, in that barren dark waste of rugged stunted fig-trees.

"Why, it looks like a garden," I said to myself.

Then I gasped, for I found myself looking down the shiny barrel of a gun.

The frightened exclamation that rose to my lips was in French and the barrel of the gun was slowly lowered. Just below me on the slope stood one of the most strange and striking figures I have seen in my life. A European and a young man he, suddenly, even in that breath-taking moment, brought to my mind a picture of the Archangel Gabriel I had once seen in a Florentine gallery. He was tall and slender with a pale fine-featured face, he had brushed-back golden-red hair, whose close tight curls receded from his temples, and his eyes, rather close together, were of a curious greenish blue. He was dressed in ragged brown breeches and a blue shirt widely open at the neck.

"Please put that down," I said apprehensively. "I did not know I was trespassing. I am sorry."

He lowered his gun, and stared as if almost as surprised at my appearance as I was at his.

"*Pardon, Madame,*" he murmured in French.

I burst into feverish explanations concerning myself and my presence there, and his expression of suspicion and distrust slightly softened. While I spoke I noticed for the first time, some fifty yards behind us, a tiny log-house half-hidden by the trees, with a low wooden bench that ran along it, and the untidy semblance of a garden. Evidently this was the gentleman's vegetable patch that Mustapha had been browsing in.

"I must apologize, Madame, for my truculence," he said at last. "I am a recluse who had hoped in this remote neighbourhood to get away from the world, and it has always been my habit to discourage the curiosity of such of the neighbourhood as climbed so high. My gesture with this was instinctive. I had not expected a European and a lady. A thousand apologies."

Though stilted and unwelcoming his manner was that of a highly-bred gentleman and a man of the world. I was devoured with curiosity as I made polite and apologetic speeches in my turn, but he was looking as if he devoutly wished I would go away!

I was preparing to do so when the rain started to beat down in cold driving torrents.

"You must shelter," said the stranger and led the way into the log cabin that, inside, consisted of one fair-sized room roughly furnished with a low divan covered with an incongruously beautiful silk embroidered rug, a big wooden table, a few chairs, and two long shelves of books. Bringing out a samovar he proceeded to make me some tea.

"A Russian," I said to myself, and afterwards proved myself right. As I have said before, the Near East and Mediterranean region nowadays abounds with Russians of good family driven from their homes who, unused to work, eke out a miserable existence in all sorts of menial posts.

Something of the kind I guessed must be the

history of my mysterious host, but in spite of what I flattered myself were subtly leading questions, he gave no word or hint of the circumstances that had brought him to this incongruous place. Our conversation was purely impersonal. He spoke of London and Paris and New York, and I received the impression that he knew them intimately, had travelled widely, and had moved in the highest circles. Sometimes at the mention of a certain place his face was shadowed as if an unpleasant memory had touched him, and at times I felt as if he had withdrawn himself a thousand miles away, as if he had forgotten my existence. Only once did he show a spark of genuine animation, and that was when I admired a fine old violin lying in a corner.

"You like music?" he asked.

"I adore it. . . . Then it is you who make the music that I have thought I heard at night when the wind blows down the mountain?"

"Possibly." He was entirely uncommunicative, and I realized perfectly that he wanted me to go.

As we parted I told him my name, and looked at him enquiringly.

"They call me Ivan," he said, after a moment's hesitation, and as if unwillingly. Ivan is Russian for John, and is one of the commonest names in Russia! As we shook hands he looked at me as if he saw me for the first time.

"Your eyes are as blue as those flowers up there," he said, waving his arm towards the mountain side where the gentians were just beginning to bloom. His remark was made with utter detachment, without any note of admiration or compliment, as if he had merely been commenting on a bit of the scenery.

When I got home I closely questioned my peasant friends who suddenly looked rather concerned.

"Ah, you have met Ivan!" they said.

"Who and what is he?"

They did not seem to know exactly, or at any rate

to be disposed to tell me. I gathered a confused impression that he was a Russian of high birth who had suffered much during the dark days of his country, and nourished an undying, even morbid hatred and bitterness against the new regime that had shattered him and his kind, that he had some two years ago built and buried himself in his eyrie and—as I knew—took strong measures to preserve his privacy.

“But what does he do. Does he ever have visitors?”

“Perhaps . . . we do not know,” the old man repeated with the obstinate reserve of the peasant. But he seemed somehow alarmed at my *rencontre*. “It is not good to be a friend of Ivan’s,” he muttered at intervals throughout the evening.

The next time I again rode down the hillside I saw Ivan, as I must call him, sitting on the rock below his house. I waved, but he made no sign of seeing me. Two minutes later I heard the sound of his violin playing an air that I had praised at our first meeting. On a sudden impulse I turned back and halted Mustapha on the fringe of his garden where he sat fiddling. He greeted me as if he had been expecting me as a matter of course.

“The tea is ready in the samovar,” he said. “You English like tea.”

To cut a long story short, almost every afternoon during my sojourn at X, I used to go up to tea in the log cabin, sitting till darkness fell, talking on every impersonal subject under the sun; on books and pictures and parties and foreign countries, on philosophy and religion and life. I talked as usual a good deal about myself, but never once did he give away any of his own history, though he spoke often of people and places that I knew, of restaurants in London and Paris where we had both eaten, of musicians we had both heard. He spoke intimately of my favourite *maitre d’hôtel* in town, of Ascot and the Quartier Latin, of the gambling rooms at Monte Carlo and of certain pieces of gossip of the gay world

of various countries. He had evidently lived a most cosmopolitan life, and had done everything and known everyone in most of the big capitals. He had a mind of wide knowledge, of culture and artistic discrimination. He was one of the most interesting conversationalists I have ever known ; that is to say when he chose, for at times he would sit for hours at a stretch, gloomy and aloof, evidently in the grip of a black unhappy mood. At such times he seemed to like my presence, but to want no confidence or verbal sympathy. If at any time I was tactless enough to try and draw him out concerning his personal life, past or present, he made me feel as if I had committed a solecism. Once I asked if I might take a photograph of him and his domain.

"Pardon me, Madame, but I prefer not," he said curtly, and sulked at me for the rest of the afternoon.

Though always courteous and attentive, never once did he exhibit any gallantry or sentiment. When the time came for me to pack up and proceed on my travels, we parted gravely and unemotionally, and without any suggestion of a future meeting.

In the course of three months' strenuous travelling I almost forgot my mysterious friend, till I found myself once more on the little primitive Turkish railway on my way back to Constantinople. At the junction of X, I again had to spend a night between trains, and partly from curiosity and partly to wile away a tedious twenty-four hours, I went up the mountain to pay a visit to my Kurdish friends.

They seemed delighted to see me, but their faces clouded over when I asked after Ivan.

"He is gone," they said.

"Gone? How, and why, and when?" I had repeatedly to press for an answer.

"A month ago. He was—taken."

"Taken by whom?"

"We do not know . . . it is better not to know. Before that, men had called on him, unknown men

under cover of night. Then he disappeared, and some of our people heard of it, and went up to his house, and they found it broken up and burnt, and the garden trampled to nothingness. We have since heard a rumour that he is dead."

Further probing elicited their suspicion that he had been concerned in some political conspiracy with his own countrymen, that he was a member of some secret society.

"Is there nothing to be seen up there?" I asked.

The old man looked alarmed.

"Madame, do not go up. These days one never knows who may be watching. It is better not to know some things."

There might be something in what he said, so I returned to X to catch my train, wondering into what trouble Ivan's poor exiled bitter heart had led him, and what retribution had fallen upon him.

Two days I had to stop off at another town, an important one, while my passports and permits were examined. While I was roaming the place, looking for a room to sleep in, a man who had helped me with the language difficulty in the train—a southern European of some kind I think—strolled up and joined me. After some hesitation he said in a warning voice: "Be careful to whom you speak in this town, Madame, of Prince——"

"Prince——? Why, I've never heard of him."

"Pardon, Madame. Some of us have heard of you at X. You knew him. You knew the man they called Ivan."

"Ivan!" So that was "Ivan"! I took my well-wisher's tip, and luckily was asked no questions.

After a nightmare of a journey faced by every kind of obstruction and creature discomfort, I reached Constantinople where I had to make the necessary arrangements for the journey home.

On the third evening, as I was sitting alone at dinner in one of the big tourist hotels, revelling in the

good food and unaccustomed feel of fresh new clothes, and listening with lazy contentment to the music of the string band, the head waiter came up and laid a letter on my table.

"A messenger has brought this," he said, "with instructions that it should be delivered to you in person immediately."

"Who brought it?" I asked, for I knew no one in Constantinople.

"A youth in poor clothing who talked in French with a curious accent. He insisted that you should be pointed out to him from over there in the entrance, looked at you intently, and walked quickly away as he saw me approach you."

I ripped open the letter which I noticed was sealed with a signet ring that I had seen before, engraved with a kind of coronet or crown. Inside it was a short note in a thin elegant handwriting that was, nevertheless, looser and less precise than when I had seen it before, as if the hand of the writer had been weak. It was dated a fortnight previously.

"When you receive this, Madame," it ran, "I shall be dead, and I am glad. Thank you for your blue eyes.—'Ivan.'"

Since then I have heard or learnt nothing further. That is all I know, and, I suppose, all I shall ever know of the queer but half-conjectured tragedy that I stumbled upon in that melting-pot of intrigue and violence that is the Middle East.

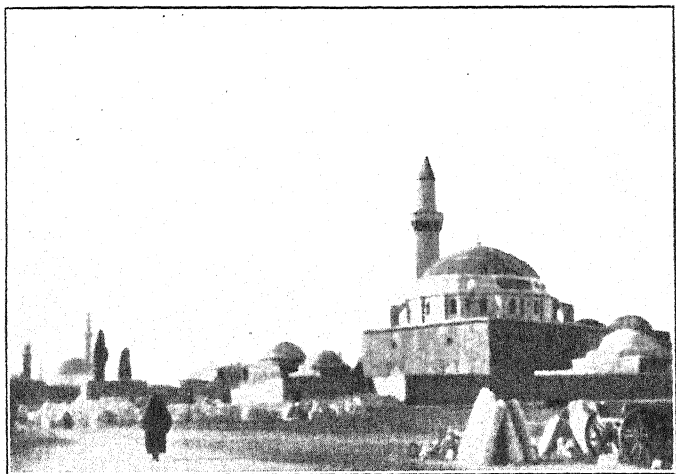
CHAPTER I

THE TOWNS OF SYRIA

THE sun of Syria !

"Yah !" I said, and made noises like a London street arab at the sun of Syria that wasn't there ! Way up among the Taurus, in the shadow of snow-crowned mountains where one might reasonably have expected it to be cold, a comfortable sunshine warmed the marrow of one's backbone. Down here, over the plains of Syria hung a leaden sky, and a tearing pincer-like wind swept down the narrow streets of Aleppo. Always the wind blew and sometimes it poured like a celestial water-spout, so that walking was no longer walking, but paddling, and sometimes it hailed. Not once during that visit to Aleppo was there any sun, and when next I visited it, three months later, there was far too much. Certainly Aleppo has an injudicious climate, and, seen through an aura of bad climatics, the plains of Syria, that stretched with irritating monotony as far as eye could see, looked a desolate land.

But possibly my judgment was fogged by a cold in the head, for, as I read in my guide book, in the intervals of selecting clean handkerchiefs, many mighty Emperors, Justinian, Constantine, Julian and others, fought for Aleppo and lost her on these afore-said plains. They saw too the wild trek of the love-besotted Marc Antony, after his desperate campaigns against the Parthians, to reach his fond dark Queen, a trek in which, made reckless by the urge of his passion, he left over 8,000 worn-out troops dead among the mountain passes of Armenia. They knew, too, subtly cruel masters such as the Persians with

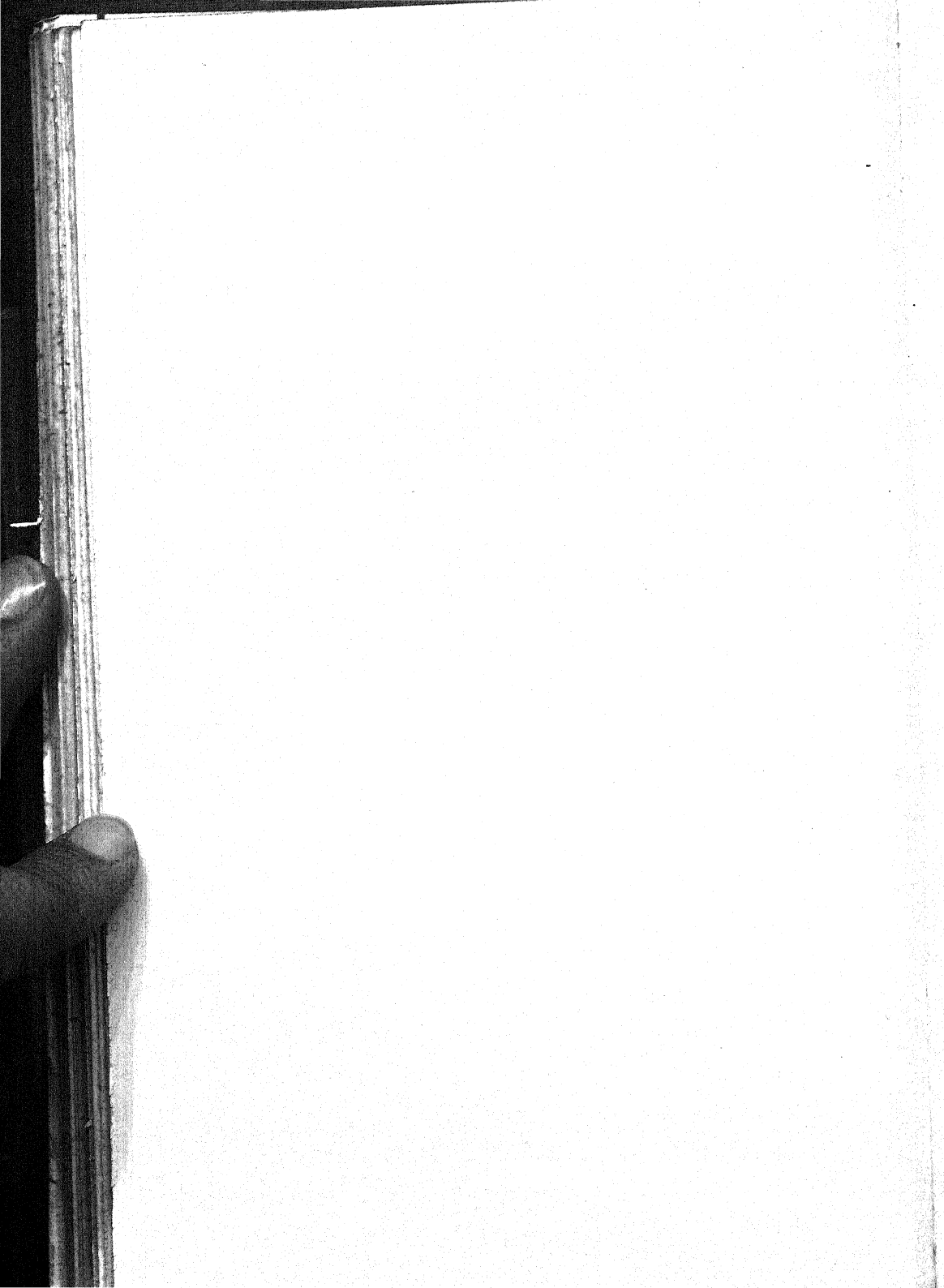


A MOSQUE, ALEPPO.



THE CITADEL, ALEPPO.

Facing page 58



their "army of Golden Spears," before they ultimately fell to all-conquering Moslem. It must be salubrious in Aleppo sometimes, for it is definitely asserted that Abraham of warm Chaldean origin stopped and milked his cows on the hill that rises behind it.

Concerning the first day of my visit I can only find one entry in my diary. "Why did I send my clothes to the wash? It will keep me here till Tuesday." In view of this humble laundry crisis, having no acquaintances in Aleppo, and a lot of time on my hands, I had three days of conscientious sight-seeing.

By far the most comforting place on a wet day was the great market square, Bal el Faraj, or "The Gate of the Clock," full of cook-houses and little shops, ramshackle cabs, and staring jostling humanity. Never was there such a mingling of whitey-brown peoples, of mongrel east and west, such a medley of languages; Arabs of every kind, smooth, richly dressed townsmen, Bedouins in striped *abbaya* and *caffia* bound with black camel's hair, ragged deformed beggars, a few Turks, many Jews, many Syrians and Levantines, some Armenians and a few Franks. Except the Arabs they are all dressed much the same, in European ready-made suits, black overcoats and fez or kalpuk. The ancestry of most of them is so mixed that I do not suppose they know themselves the components of their blood, and it takes a stranger a long time to sort out one race from the other by sight, and then one only does it by a kind of instinct, though I believe an habitué can tell even a man's religion by his appearance. Everyone and everything moves rapidly, people, cabs, animals, including camels, donkeys, and dogs, without looking where they are going; without apology they knock anyone or anything down, and everyone stares in a brazen shiny-eyed way that makes one want to knock a few heads together. Speaking of origin a man of

these parts adjudge his face more by his religion and habits than by his blood. Syrians, properly speaking are all people, except Jews, whose forebears used to speak Araméen, an old language akin to Hebrew. Now actually, I believe, except in three villages of the Anti-Lebanus, Araméen has died out and been replaced by Arabic. A Frank is any European, generally a Christian, who has retained his European habits as opposed to the Levantine who is a European (generally a Greek or an Italian) who has adopted Eastern manners and customs. The Arabs of Syria give a bad character to the inhabitants of Aleppo. "El halebi chelibi," "The man of Aleppo is a rogue," they say, though whether truly or not, I do not know.

The women of these eastern Mediterranean races, apart of course from the Arabs, though emancipated in comparison with the women of the Turks, are far more rigidly kept than in Europe, for these warm-blooded semi-Orientals are jealous and mistrustful to the last degree. Whatever modern and feminist ideas they may have acquired from contact with Europeans nature is too strong for them. An intelligent young Syrian, working for the British in Aleppo, took me once for a six mile walk in an icy wind with the sole purpose of threshing out the woman question. While I eloquently pointed out the advantages to both parties of sex equality, and painted a touching and Utopian picture of the felicity of a marriage of mutual trust and respect, he agreed in theory with every word I said. His reason was convinced but not his Oriental heart. Always he harped back on the same idea. "Truly an ideal state . . . How happy both could be." Here came the "But." "Mais la femme a le caractère faible. Elle ne pourrait pas . . ." His natural conception of a woman was of a sweet helpless thing, well meaning, but weak, who if let at large must inevitably fall a prey to the first predatory male who twisted his long moustache at her!

All the same the men of the Mediterranean

have the profoundest contempt for the harem system of their neighbours, the Arabs, a contempt founded on sound knowledge of its futility, and they will demonstrate to you how easy it is for a handful of idle women, cunning as monkeys, to hoodwink a man. Only a few days later indeed, down in Damascus, I myself stumbled across a scandalous, but not unamusing instance. A middle-aged and jealous Arab merchant had a young and pretty wife, who in her turn had a lover, who had easy access to her apartment every evening, dressed in the all-disguising clothes and veil of a woman. Several times the husband had seen him as he sat with the wife, but never of course is a man allowed to address or to see one of his wife's women friends unveiled. Growing more daring, one night the wife announced to him that her friend was in trouble, having quarrelled with her husband, and that she had invited her to spend the night with her, as she dare not go home. The kind-hearted husband, full of sympathy, willingly agreed to sleep that night in his own apartment. Dawn came and the alleged lady friend, without troubling to resume his disguise, went out into the courtyard to wash his hands and face before departing. But the husband, after a lonely night, rising earlier than his wont, found him there. The young man, without losing his head, cut short inquiries by declaring that he was the husband of the sorrowful lady, that he had come to look for her, and was distracted at finding that she had already left, in fact that he was actually washing away his remorseful tears. The husband, completely hoodwinked, reassured him, delivered a touching little homily on the necessity of kindness to young wives, made him a handsome present, and told him to go home to his wife, to kiss and be friends and not quarrel again !

One sees many faces in Aleppo, however clean or well-to-do, disfigured by the complaint known to the Arabs as "habb es sene," "Spot of a year," and to

the French as "Bouton d'Alep." It consists of groups of red spots or pustules on the face and body, not painful I believe, but leaving behind great white scars that last for life. Neither Europeans nor natives are exempt, and I saw one adorably pretty little six-year-old daughter of a white resident so afflicted.

A long foot-sore walk up a cobbled street loses one in the Arabian Nights Dream of the Souks or Bazaar. One hears little of the Aleppo Souks; I do not know why, probably because few tourists visit the northern extremity of Syria, but with the exception of the bazaars at Stamboul, they are quite the most beautiful I have ever seen. Here, Europe and the Levant are left behind, and one is straightway lost in the heart of the Arabic East, and I say lost advisedly, for more than once, turning corners haphazard, tempted by a rich blaze of colour, or an alluring smell, or a glimpse of curious things, have I been lost for an hour or more. But never till my feet gave out, did I care, my senses satiated with colour, and rare blendings of light and shadow and cameos of silhouette, and the mystery of little dark corners. In such Souks could one imagine the gay amorous daughters of the Arabian Nights doing their shopping.

Under such dim archways did wicked Amine creep to obtain poison firtres for her rivals and the unsavoury ingredients with which she concocted her unholy spells. In similar box-like shops did Zobeide purchase the rich fruits and sumptuous comestibles with which she and her gay sisters feasted the Three Calenders and the great Haroun el Raschid. Ali Cogia himself visited Aleppo on his long journey to Hindustan and it seemed to me that his astral body still haunted those shadowy by-ways seeking adventure. I could have sworn that any one of a score of bent grey-bearded shoe-makers, who stitched interminably at scarlet babouches, was Baba Moustapha, and that at any moment Morgiana, veiled and bright-eyed, might arrive to tempt him with a handful of

gold. And it seemed as if the handsome youths with eyes like hawks and noses like scimitars, who sat in the glowing silk Souks, might each tell a tale of love and intrigue such as the young Christian merchant told to the Sultan of Kashgar.

The main thoroughfare of the Souks that leads up to the citadel is dim as a cloister, roofed with vaulted grey stone like the nave of a church. A most fascinating smell accompanies you all the way up; the rich aroma of the bakeries and sweetmeat shops, of burnt sugar and browning pastry, that merges into a chromatic scale of vegetables, and oranges, and lemons, and onions, and dates, and spices, and herbs, and ointments and perfumes from the little kiosks, where grey-bearded merchants measure drop by drop the precious pungent liquids into tiny phials. All these blend again into the husky smell of old leather and cordage, and of the tanned skins of sheep, and tiny black and white lambs. To the left are the Souks of the shoemakers, hundreds of them, filled with babouches and slippers and low boots of scarlet and yellow and blue leather, embroidered or plain, till one wonders that there are enough feet in Syria to fill them.

Beyond are more Souks overflowing with miles of silk and cotton of all the colours of the rainbow, and queer embroideries, and gold and silver cords, and gay trappings of all sorts, made up, in a hundred other Souks, into garments to suit every Oriental taste. In these Souks stand and bargain mysterious veiled ladies of whom one can see nothing but their bright black eyes, and rugged black hawk-faced Bedouins from the far deserts, pondering as gravely as any gazelle-eyed maiden on the relative merits of striped or plain abbayas. The noisiest Souk of all is the market for old clothes, where anyone is at liberty, if so he pleases, to tear off any article of his outer clothing and sell it to the highest bidder. The spirit of bargain hunting seems to run even stronger with

old clothes than with new, and a pitched battle of fierce vituperation will be waged over an unseemly-looking mass of rags that scarcely seems worth a whisper. Through high archways, leading into big khans, one can glimpse piles of rich merchandise unloading and unpacking.

Tourists are scarce in Aleppo as I have said, and one can prowl, dreaming, undisturbed, almost unnoticed. Near the Souk of the slippers is the Djama Zakariya or Big Mosque, built by Nourredin, whose courtyard, that no infidel may enter, jostles with believers. Inside a little golden grill is one of the many legendary tombs of Zacharias, father of St. John the Baptist, who apparently had as many tombs throughout the length and breadth of Syria as a cat has lives. Every five minutes in the broader Souks one is nuzzled in the back by minute, docile, heavily loaded donkeys, who try their very best not to step on one. Anyone who has known the donkeys of the East will never laugh at or revile them again. Tiny, sagacious, plucky little beasts, they work day in, day out, eye to eye with their masters, with never a grumble, never sick or sorry or downhearted. They seem to strike a sympathetic chord even in the heart of that most sardonic beast the camel. A dozen times a day one may see a long string of heavily-loaded lofty-looking camels mincing along with the gait of women wearing tight stays, behind the lead of a wise little three-foot donkey, who knows his job as pace-maker and mascot perfectly, and whose tiny trot, trot, trotting feet must take at least ten steps to every one of his lumping retinue.

Shaking off the Arabian Nights one blinks, stepping out of the musky gloom of the Souks to the broad dusty road facing the citadel. This huge artificial mound on which the citadel stands was probably the pivot on which hung many sanguinary battles for the possession of Aleppo. The ancient Beroera, Sal-manaser II of Assyria, Seleucus Nicator, Chosroes II

of Persia, Abou Oubeida the Arab, the Byzantine general Nicéphore, all these held and lost her. The Wars of the Crusaders ravaged her, the Mongols and the Mamelouks shook her foundations. But on the great high road of the Persian and Indian caravans, nothing could destroy her prosperity. The French, the English, the Venetians and the Dutch built up her trade, which she only partially lost with the opening of the sea route to India.

The Citadel of Aleppo, like that of Angora, is omnipresent. Its deep moat, its great entrance steps, barred by three doors, face one with a stark defiance. On the first door, which is of iron, a sculptured serpent seemed to snarl at one, on the other side of the inner door are two carved lions, one who weeps and the other who laughs. Above, where rose the old fortress, is a mass of ruined masonry including a fragment adorned with a tablet to the effect that on this site did Abraham milk his cow. Considering the inadequate travel facilities of those days, Abraham must indeed have been a restless liver, for over an astonishingly wide area of the Near and Middle East does one come across authenticated spots where he paused to perform some such simple domestic act. If one wants to save oneself many a weary cobbled mile of walking, one ascends the minaret of the little mosque that towers above the ruins, for there below and around, lies the complete map of Aleppo and Northern Syria. When the visibility is good one can see in detail every wall and gate and mosque, and the quarters where dwell the various brands of inhabitants ; Bashita, the Ghetto with its blue whitewash, El Kitab where dwell the Levantine Christians, Ed Djedide and Salibe, headquarters of the other Christians, and the suburbs of El Tellal and Azizye, with their new European buildings, and the great rambling quarter under the southern wall that is exclusively Arab. One can see, too, the little river Konoueck, and so many cemeteries that one wonders how so many of the people can have

died, and yet leave over two and a half million alive, and the alluvial dusty desert that stretches with infinite monotony to the horizon.

With Aleppo my fervour of enforced sight-seeing died a natural death, and I'm afraid I gave the other towns of Syria but an unintelligent inspection, for ever the sun eluded me though I kept flying south. I cannot say much of the railways of Syria, and the journey down to Damascus seemed interminable. Starting at the uninspiring hour of six in the morning, I watched the sun rise over an infinite expanse of yellow grey desert, only relieved at rare intervals by small villages of queer conical huts, built of mud, without any framework of wood, owing to the treelessness of the district, that clustered together like beehives, each on the top of a tiny elevation. Here and there in the distance were groups of black dots, the encampments of Bedouins, whose women have woven, from black goat skins, the rainproof "Black Tents of Kedar," mentioned in the Song of Solomon. To the left along the horizon was outlined the towering chain of the Mountains of Lebanon, bulwark of Syria, that runs right down almost from the Taurus, getting lower till it dwindles in the plains of the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

Slowly a pale sun began to thaw the chill gloom of my compartment. Hama spelt a hastily snatched cup of coffee which added savour to the charm of its appearance in the distance, and the curious *na 'oura* or hydraulic water wheels, whose grating sound never ceases night or day.

More coffee at Homs gave me the courage to resolutely sail through the station of Baalbec without breaking my journey. I have no excuse for not stopping off to see Baalbec, with its temples of half the gods of mythology, the stamping ground of archaeologists, the Mecca of tourists from all over the world, except that quite simply I did not want to. In the course of many years travelling I have had

enough of "The Glory that was Rome," except in its proper place. Baalbec is not a subject I mention now in the course of conversation, for I remember the result of a similar omission at a certain spot in Algeria called Timgad. The exclamations, the interrogations, and the reproaches ! I did not want to see Baalbec any more than I wanted to see Timgad, and if tackled to exasperation on the subject, I shall do as I did in the case of Timgad. I shall just lie and say that I have seen it, and that it is wonderful, and that I really think the amphitheatre, if any, is as large as that of Rome, and so on *ad infinitum*.

I was rather impressed by the approach under a steely starlight to Damascus, through wintry gardens touched with hoar frost, woods of slim ghostly trees, and a deep ravine cut through snow-topped hills with a little river running like a thread of quicksilver. Twelve hours later I woke to disappointment and disillusion. Here in Damascus, past sanctuary of history, art and commerce, coveted of all men, not only was there no sun (I was getting obstinate about that sun !) but, it seemed to me, little beauty. Tram-lines, smart French officers, cinemas, dance halls, cafés, faked-curio hawkers, all these broke my heart. The Souks, with their corrugated iron roofs and distressingly European assortment of merchandise, were not the Souks of my dreams, the ramshackle town itself was not my pearl of the East. The only thing that at all came up to expectations was the street called Straight, which I had known in advance to be extremely crooked. In Damascus too, another wild-goose feather fluttered out of my fingers, and went to swell the limbo of Things that Never Happened, for a Consular Angel with the flaming sword of officialdom stood between me and a southern country I had cast a sneaking eye on. Saying harsh things of wild-goose feathers, I attended an elegant little English dance, bought succulent sweets in the Souks, took no intelligent interest in anything at all, till at the end of

thirty-six hours, the hazard of fate, and a pig-headed determination to get warm, turned my feet towards the Holy Land.

The drive from Damascus to Beyrout is really lovely, starting through rolling country to the foot of the Lebanon Mountains which one climbs by many a nerve-racking hairpin turn. You may start the journey if you will in a cotton frock; a couple of hours later when you reach the summit, you are glad of two fur coats. All round the Mountains of Lebanon lie in all their wild rocky grandeur, deep in snow, dazzling, immaculate. Through the pass the road dips, and little by little the snow is left behind and in another hour, clinging to a promontory running out round the Bay of Saint George, Beyrout lies before one like a map. As we drove down night was falling swiftly, in our frosty faces was the crimson glow of a sunset that might have come from a canvas of Turner himself, that touched the mountains across the Bay with orange and pale rose, and below, the lights of Beyrout sprang up one by one as if the stars had taken it into their heads to fall to earth.

Beyrout offers no pabulum to the sightseer, though a good deal to the historian for, like the other towns of Syria, she has been the beautiful slave of many conquerors, with her sweet soft Mediterranean climate and good harbourage. In her present phase she is mainly modern and European, her population is French and Greek, Cypriote and Armenian, and the latter much massacred race, in especial, during the last century brought her great prosperity.

It is a gay little town, Beyrout, with a cosmopolitan society of its own. Work-weary French and British officials from Syria and Palestine run up or down to Beyrout for distraction as, in England, men run over to Paris. There are good shops and pretty women, and relatively smart frocks in plenty, there are dances, dinner parties, and Thé Dansants—and there also is gossip! When the gay world wants

rustic surroundings it betakes itself to one of a score of little places dotted about among the mountains. Within the last year Beyrout society has been immortalized by Pierre Benoit, author of the famous "L'Atlantide," who spent eighteen months between it and the mountains, subtly skitting English and American living types to the scandalized delight of his victims. The chief haunt of the elect is the Tamaris where one takes tea, feeling really very elegant indeed, and dances to a good band. For the passing stranger without acquaintance the evenings are singularly empty. Two or three dance halls there are, of various degrees of respectability, but all amazingly dreary, for the Beyrout bourgeoisie of Levantine and Frank goes to bed early, and the Colonial French are not so well paid that they can afford to waste money on tepid sweet champagne and its concomitants. In fact, unless "invité" one finds the pursuit of pleasure in Beyrout very hard work indeed!

It was from Beyrout that Lady Hester Stanhope took her first plunge into the troubled heart of the East. An amazing woman she must have been, considering the days she lived in, six foot and handsome, unconventional to a degree, witty, sometimes insolent, utterly fearless, magnetic to men. As niece of Pitt she could have ruled society in London, but preferred to wander alone through the deserts and mountains of Syria, seeking adventure, and to wield her power, through the strength of her personality alone, over savage chieftains. She was the forerunner of a score or more of women who since have responded to the call of the road, the silent voices of the waste places of the earth.

In 1810 at the age of thirty-four, shaking the scented dust of civilization off her feet, she went to the Levant and eventually settled down among the Druses of Lebanon, building herself a fortress at Dahar Djouni where, during her long sojourn, surrounded by her savage court, from time to time she entertained such

visitors as Lamartine, Doctor Madden, and Prince Maximilian of Bavaria. Apart from these occasional guests she avoided the company of Europeans, except such as could do her service, and threw herself heart and soul into things Oriental, intriguing against the British officials of the country whom she despised, imposing upon her Arab adherents a vigorous discipline and servitude, striving to set the Druses in revolt against Ibrahim Pasha, and to give fresh impetus to the declining power of the Sultan. To do her service was no light task, for she spared no one. Assuredly she was one of those unfortunates whose souls by some freak of fate, have been born into the wrong bodies. She was born a great lady of England; her soul was the soul of an Oriental, with its love of pomp and magnificence, its lust for power, and its scorn for the lower orders. She made her own politics and her own religion. Among her religious convictions was a belief in the transmigration of souls, and in astrology, in the study of which she was an expert, and—oddly feminine trait in a personality almost savagely masculine—she had a passionate regard and pity for animals, especially for horses. She enforced her autocracy by personal castigation. "If she were resolved she could cheat the devil himself," her uncle, William Pitt, said of her, and yet her end was without grandeur.

Regally extravagant, she spent money like water, and when her fortune was dissipated she borrowed right and left from Levantine usurers. When this source of income inevitably in its turn became used up, she tried to obtain money from England, even going so far as to write to Queen Victoria. Failing to obtain funds that were by now real necessity, refusing to accept help or sympathy from the few Europeans living in Syria, robbed and deserted by her erstwhile courtiers and slaves, she shut herself up in her castle with the five Arab retainers who had remained faithful to her, and died alone in 1839.

unmourned and unattended. Hearing of her illness the British Consul and the American missionary at Beyrout rode across the mountains to visit her, and found her body lying alone, in an empty room from which every scrap of furniture had been stolen, in a plundered house. They buried her, the two of them, by torchlight in her garden, overlooking the wild mountains of Lebanon that she had so loved. Dreamer, warrior, with the body of an Amazon, less a siren than an autocrat, she was the first of the women explorers. Incidentally she was the inspiration of the "Chatelaine du Liban" by Pierre Benoit, whose favourite literary daughters are mysterious and capricious, haughty and rather more than women.

During my brief visit to Beyrout, I was lucky enough to fall in with the inaugural ball of General and Madame Sarraïl, the new High Commissioner for Syria. I have never seen Government House in the daytime, but certainly at night it has a perfect décor for such an event. As one drove up the short approach, lit with thousands of coloured electric bulbs, the house loomed huge and regal, and against massive pillars two tall attendants in flowing burnous, glistening head-dresses and tall lances, made a noble bit of local colour.

Inside the huge hall stood the leading residents of Beyrout, in semicircle round the High Commissioner and his wife, as the latter received their guests, dignified, genial, grey-haired figures both of them. In the big ball-room where one danced somewhat painfully on a marble floor, was a most cosmopolitan gathering, a sprinkling of all the nationalities that throng the Mediterranean seaboard, of every shade of colouring, from Scandinavian blonde to a deep dusky olive. A striking contrast to the exotic beauty of the Syrian women with their vivid frocks and make-up, were the ladies of the American mission, with their simple toilettes and serious unadorned faces. One revolved with slim swarthy Syrians who

danced with the feline suppleness of Argentines, with elegant dashing French officers in sky-blue uniforms, and a variety of steps with the Consular service of half a score of nationalities. It seemed to me to be in every way a perfectly good party, but I was given to understand that there was a whole family of serpents in this particular Eden, that many notabilities, especially Syrian ones, had not accepted their invitations, and that there was a good deal of dissatisfaction and heart-burning. For the policy of the new High Commissioner was strictly anti-clerical, and therefore not popular, as has been proved since by the disastrous religious war that broke out a few months later.

To the north of Beyrout lies Tripoli on its tiny leafy peninsular, along a winding Corniche road, whose beauty of hills and sea makes one almost forget to catch one's breath at the light-hearted fatalism with which one's driver takes the hairpin corners. It is very lovely, all that coast of ancient Phoenicia, either by road or by sea, and sets one dreaming of its old masters, wonderful folk, history-makers, worshippers of Baal, in whose blood sang the voice of unknown mighty oceans, whose galleons carried precious merchandise, gold and spices, rich silks and perfumes, golden-haired and ebony-skinned slaves through all the seas, to all the ports of the world, who first brought trade and a breath of civilization to our own country.

THE HOLY LAND



CHAPTER I

JERUSALEM

"AND when He came near He beheld the city and wept over it, Saying if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

Apart from religion or curiosity, unless one be the most unimaginative person in the world, one cannot but be conscious of a slight sense of thrill as ploughing slowly along by road or rail through the grey desolate hills and plains, veritably the stony ground of Holy Writ, one gets the first glimpse of Jerusalem. The thrill flickers, wavers and dies. Jerusalem is the saddest city in the world.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, wept for its wickedness, its blindness, its heartlessness. To-day one could weep over its vulgarity, its hatred, malice and uncharitableness.

This is from its religious aspect. Historically it is of course interesting, and too well-known to bear re-description; socially it is mildly agreeable; pictorially it has an oddly appealing charm of situation, and some singularly beautiful corners tucked away amid monstrous growths of modernity. Jerusalem, more than any other place I have seen, looks exactly like its pictures. From any high building one can get the view that has been familiarized by educational books and stories since our earliest childhood. There is the dome of the Holy Sepulchre, the walls of

Solomon's Wells, there are the gates of Damascus, and of Jaffa ; across a stony yellowish valley is Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives stands out against the sky, all exactly where and as you expected them to be. And there is a clearness of atmosphere that marks each point with the precision of a map, and if you can blot out of your mind's eye the monstrous fungi of recent and often German construction that stick up, hideous and altogether out of perspective, there is a queer precise charm about the ancient town who stretches her arms over a number of tiny hills.

At first sight, Jerusalem charms the eye and the imagination ; on closer acquaintance one only sees her infinite sadness. She is sad because her beauty lies in tradition and in sacred associations, and now all the beauty, all the glory of her heritage, is shattered by the vulgarity of man. Everything has been done to make her holy places as banal, as catch-penny as possible. Everything is tidied and neatened and profaned. Everywhere that a railing can be put up, a railing *is* put up, just so that another sixpence can be wrested from some poor hopeful pilgrim. Every natural little human sentiment, trivial but touching, is debased by some astute Levantine who has something to sell. Nothing is sacred to those who see in the symbols of a religion other than their own a rich harvest of baksheesh. And this is by no means the worst, for who can particularly blame a man, and an Oriental at that, for being blind to another man's religion ? It is the Christians themselves who exhibit the least Christian spirit of all. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is too well-known to need description, but to the least knowledgeable or actively religious of us, even if it be not as some authorities aver, the place where for our sakes was suffered the most glorious Death in all the world, it is at any rate its accepted symbol, and the symbol of a religion of peace and loving-kindness. And here, where each denomination

of the Christian faith has its allotted corner, there is more petty and sacrilegious fighting and cheating than in any stock exchange or pawn shop; so much so, indeed, that so-called Christians cannot be trusted to arbitrate among themselves. When one visits the holy church it is a pair of old Mohammedan door-keepers who shuffle forward at one's approach. It takes Mohammedans apparently to maintain peace in the Holy of Holies of Christianity!

Dogma is stronger than real religion, it seems, and petty details more important than belief. As I have said, there are some who believe that the site of the Crucifixion was not the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but Golgotha, locally called the Garden Tomb, a little walled garden, just outside the Damascus Gate; and among the Christians of Jerusalem feeling on this point runs as high and as vindictively as in party politics. The curatress of the Garden Tomb, an erudite and genuinely religious lady, told me that frequently guides in the service of the tourist agencies deliberately disregard the wishes of their clients should they express a wish to visit Golgotha; therefore it is better to employ an Arab or a Jewish guide, who has no views on this subject but baksheesh! On one occasion, this lady told me, she heard, shortly after closing time, a violent altercation going on outside the gate. On inquiry she found that it was a party of English tourists doing Jerusalem by car, who in spite of the protests of their guide had insisted on being taken to the Garden Tomb. Seeing them to be determined the guide said nothing but took them all round the city with as many detours as possible, bringing them to the tomb at an hour when he knew that the gates were closed for the day.

The conflicting claims as to the site of the Crucifixion is one of many similar cases. Even the exact plan of the walls of old Jerusalem has never been settled to everyone's satisfaction. It seems curious

in a place which is the very keystone of a mighty religion, and I suppose is to be accounted for by the disturbed state of the country in early Bible days. Ours was a creed that fought every inch of its way against prejudice and bigotry, its early disciples were exiled and martyred and scattered to the four winds, often obliged to practise their faith in secret, and against great odds ; poor, illiterate folk too, many of them, with neither the capacity nor the opportunity to keep records and write histories. Whatever the reason, it is a fact that there is but little authentic record of the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, so that much valuable and interesting information has for ever been lost to us.

Of all the "sights" of Jerusalem the tragic Via Dolorosa is perhaps the only Bible memory that has not been profaned and spoilt. Being an ordinary thoroughfare, in constant use by the ordinary inhabitant, it has been impossible to rail it in, to charge gate-money, to erect cheap-jack booths. In itself it is really beautiful—long, winding and dim, its stone steps overset by curious half-arched supports. Even by day there hangs about it, like an impalpable cerement, the flavour of the past ; at night it seems haunted by ghosts. Many a night or early morning have I walked down it, for it was a short cut from the hotel area of Jerusalem through the Arab quarter, to the Austrian hospice where I sometimes lodged ; dim, mysterious, sacrosanct, it seemed somehow to reproach one.

Yes, Jerusalem fills one with mingled sadness and irritation, anything but religion, Christian religion that is, for one is inevitably drawn into comparison with the clear simplicity of the Mohammedan faith, wherever it may find itself represented. The Mosque of Omar is a sheer joy, that not even the ubiquitous Arab guide, whom one cannot shake off, can spoil with his flow of incomprehensible jargon, and his most inaccurate mingling of facts concerning Abraham,

Mohammed, the Roman Empire, the Crusaders, and the Garden of Gethsemane.

"You take photograph, missis, yes, no? Very nice picture. Gethsemane Jesus walk. Crusaders' stables, many gentlemen take picture. My mother she Christian but no money. That stone he Abraham sat. No money, damn, no. Nice picture you not take? Thank you, missis."

But his monologue runs on automatically—a rehearsed piece, one would imagine—and he does not seem to expect anything but the ultimate baksheesh, and his voice is not more disturbing than the braying of a donkey. With the placidity of the Oriental he surreptitiously chews the butt of a cigarette, while one stands inside the Mosque, lost in a dream of colour, prismatic and elusive, seeming as if one stood in the heart of some great glowing jewel. Abraham, Melchizedek, the sons of Aaron, Saladin and the rest—these are ghosts, and nothing is real but this warm, glowing soul of Mohammedanism, religion half of war, half of philosophy, that stands aloof, proud, and infinitely serene. Small wonder is it that the Moslems have a dislike of strangers within their mosques that we sometimes term fanatical. With all their many faults their God to them is real and ever present, and in His house there is none of the idle curiosity, the irreverent whispering and frivolous absence of mind that so often fill our churches.

As the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem stands for the soul of Islam, so does the Wailing Wall stand for that of the Jews, that dark, tragic soul crushed into the dust of the centuries, that gives itself out without pride or shame to the world in its desolate Litany :

"Because of the palace that is devastated,
Because of the Temple that is destroyed,
Because of the walls that are fallen,
Because of our majesty that is past and gone,
Because of our great men who have died,
Because of the precious stones that are burnt,
Because of the prayers that have faltered,
Because of those who have despised her."

The wailing answer goes up like a mighty tide :
" We sit alone and weep ! "

Their prayer is a cry from the past :

" Gather together the children of Jerusalem,
Hasten, oh, hasten, liberator of Zion,
Speak to the heart of Jerusalem,
That beauty and majesty may encircle Zion ;
Oh, turn pitifully towards Jerusalem,
May there be royalty in Zion ;
Consider those who weep for Jerusalem,
Let peace and felicity enter into Zion,
And may the rod of Jesse flourish in Jerusalem."

A world of desolation and lost hopes rises to heaven
from those hoarse weary voices.

Touching the Jewish element, Jerusalem has been
but little affected by the great tide of cosmopolitan
Jews who during the last few years have flocked all
over the rest of Palestine, under the impetus of the
Zionist movement. Jerusalem as a home for living
Jews is no more. Many of the Jews that one sees
walking in the streets are probably living replicas
in mind, body and soul of those who idled at street
corners to watch Christ pass by, of those who howled
and execrated the silent tragic figure on the Cross.
Nowadays they who form the more active members
of the community are divided into two main categories.
There are the Achkenazim who came in great numbers
in the nineteenth century from Russia, Poland,
Germany, and the Netherlands, and there are the
Boukhares, a small group of Mongol origin. These
latter in character and mode of living are less repre-
sentatively Jewish than the others, are better to do,
and form a colony of their own.

He is not impressive in mind or body, the Jew of
Jerusalem, miserably poor, living on doles, called the
" Khalouka," from his rich co-religionaries of Europe,
without the enterprise or initiative to strike out for
himself, devoid of practical education, boasting some-
times a recondite form of erudition, gathering among
his fellows to wrangle interminably over some unim-

portant point of theology, torturing and rejoicing his soul with infinite hair-splitting. Some of the older men with their long, black garments and long ringlets, have fine Hebraic patriarchal faces, but the younger ones are often frankly ludicrous, with ill-built, round-shouldered, narrow-chested figures, thin to emaciation, buttoned into long tight black coats, weak chinless faces, framed with long side-curls, and a flat, broad-brimmed hat of the bowler family pulled down and resting on their large flattened-out ears. They used to fascinate me, these latter, and often have I followed one, trying to make out what manner of man it was, and what went on behind that queer vacant face that was ever bent downwards, its eyes fixed on the ground. Always it walked very quickly, with a loose gait of some long-limbed bird, apparently without aim or purpose. The women that throng the Ghetto are for the most part shapeless and coarse in type, and dreadfully oily. Sometimes one catches a glimpse of a wild luxurious exotic beauty, of huge black eyes set in a fine-featured olive face, with a little nose curved like a scimitar, but this fleeting beauty is very young, and usually obscured by slovenliness and dirt. A moribund race, the Jews, one would say, dying for lack of the vital force, if one had not seen the virile creatures of the coast towns. Sometimes, though, queer dramas are played out in the by-ways of the Ghetto, and little tragedies half sad, half ludicrous.

One such drama, played to a splendid finish and marking an epoch in the history of the Jews, was the life history of Ben Yehouda, the Lithuanian Jew who brought back the use of the Hebrew tongue to Palestine. The name by which he was called in Russia was Eliezer Lazarovitch Elianow, till he changed it to Ben Jehouda, which means "the Son of Judea." His childhood was spent in a little lost town of Lithuania, studying all the day and far into the night in the Jewish *yechiba* (university), listening

to the old rabbis as they gave forth their complicated interpretations of the Talmud, and indulged in the interminable mystifying discussion and arguments on minute points of logic and general hair-splitting so dear to the old-time Jewish heart. His young manhood was wrapped in a maze of phrases, and his simple needs were supplied by the organized system of begging that also supported his friends and fellow students.

The *confrerie* of the little *yechiba* in this particular ghetto, as in other ghettos, alone were conversant with the Hebrew language, for in those days it was considered sacrilegious to employ the sacred tongue for anything but religious writings, and these same young men created something more than a scandal when they gave out their intention of restoring to the light of day and common use the sonorous beauty of their natal tongue. But by degrees they progressed in their design, and little newspapers in Hebrew began to appear, and a novel was translated from the French.

On account of his remarkable gifts Lazarovitch found employment as tutor in the house of a rich merchant of Moscow, where in the intervals of completing his education he fell in love with Deborah, the daughter of his patron, who sympathized with and upheld him in his wild dreams of reconstructing the Jewish race through its language. They exchanged vows of eternal love and faithfulness when he finally set forth in search of his Grail. For several years the young Ben Jehouda, frail, penniless, sickly, consumptive, but with his soul aflame, travelled the hard roads of Europe and North Africa, begging every inch of his way, pursuing his studies and researches. Warsaw, Berlin, Vienna, Belgrade, Algiers, Tunis, Carthage, through all these towns his tired feet wandered, finding rest sometimes in the houses of idealists and dreamers, caught in the flame of his enthusiasm. Of these, one was Smolensky, the novelist. Then Deborah, flying from her father's house, came to shed

her soft radiance over his life, and an offer of twenty francs a month from the "Flower of Sharon" in Palestine gave him his practical opportunity.

The young couple established themselves in Jerusalem, at enmity with the Achkenazim of northern origin and the Sephardim of the south, who carry, or used to carry, their religious quarrels even into the manner of cutting a chicken's throat, but who joined together in anathematizing a man profane and revolutionary enough not only to teach and to publish a newspaper in Hebrew instead of the horrible Yiddish jargon, then in common use, but to talk it in the bosom of his own family. Twenty francs a month is not a generous sum on which to support a young and rapidly increasing family, and the sufferings and privation, the obloquy and contempt that Ben Jehouda and his young wife endured must have been terrible. The story of their life in Jerusalem reads like one long martyrdom. But his resolution remained unshakable, though he was publicly cursed and excommunicated by the assembled Jews, and soon lost his job on the "Flower of Sharon," and his eldest child was born dumb, as retribution, so his neighbours said, for his impiousness. Just before her death from privation and consumption Deborah, on whose tombstone were engraved the words "To the first mother of the New-Born Jewish people," begged her weeping husband to take in marriage her younger sister, whose youth and fresh young vigour might give him strength to carry on. On the very day that his new wife gave birth to their first child he was seized by Turkish gendarmes and thrown into prison on account of a passionate appeal he had published for the restitution of Palestine to the Jews.

Then a miracle happened for Ben Jehouda. At the very moment that a strange Jewish pilgrim from Morocco, taken with pity for a co-religionist, went sponsor for him and prepared to lead him from prison, the rain began to fall, the long-delayed rain of the spring

season, for which the countryside had been sending up despairing prayers for many weeks, for want of which the crops were withering away and the cattle dying and the people starving. This miracle, accepted as such by the superstitious, ignorant people, turned the scales in favour of Ben Jehouda. A voice, besides, was crying from the wilderness ; Theodore Herzl was finding converts to his conviction that Judea could only be re-born through the medium of her rightful language.

From being the outcast and the pariah of Jerusalem, Ben Jehouda became its idol. His words were listened to with respect and his theories put into practice with passionate enthusiasm. Jewish schools sprang up which, though the orthodox Jew of the Khalouka held suspiciously aloof, were filled with the children of the new and hopeful emigrants who, under the impulsion of the dawning Zionist movement, were beginning to flock to the land of their forefathers. Even the resident Europeans, at that time mainly Germans, seeing the inevitability of the new movement, fell into line. Now most of the resident Jews of Palestine talk Hebrew, and, with Arabic and English, it is the official language of the country. The twelve stones upon the Mount of Olives, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, that are the foundation of the new Jewish University opened by Lord Balfour in the spring of 1925, represent the first act of the early Zionists to commemorate the re-birth of the Jewish language.

And a few years ago Ben Jehouda died, full of peace and honour.

To-day, as we "moderns" have made it, Jerusalem is a mixture of Bible and Baedeker and baksheesh, blended and dovetailed together so that you do not know where one begins and the other ends.

Ten plagues, they say, descended upon Egypt in olden times ; one plague, more virulent than all the others, has descended of late on Palestine, and in particular upon Jerusalem. Tourists form the main

industry of Jerusalem, form its exports, its imports, its revenue. Every minute the statisticians tell us, someone is born and somebody dies ; every minute a tourist arrives in Jerusalem, or a hundred tourists, not in ones, and twos and threes, or even in families, but by boatload and trainload, sometimes several boatloads and trainloads in a day, each on a personally conducted tour ; and these released for a moment by their ubiquitous guide, philosopher and friend, while he fights with hotel proprietors about accommodation, spread like a swarm of locusts over the Jaffa road. No one but myself ever seems to go to Palestine except in swarms, with every moment day or night of a fixed itinerary mapped out in advance, tips included ; Americans mostly, who, Bible and Baedeker in hand, see more of Palestine in five days than anyone else in five weeks. Marvellous people, they collect the maximum of " sights " with the minimum of time, expense and discomfort, at the risk of a breakdown from nervous exhaustion. Their average age is sixty-five, and they all dress in neat grey suits and serviceable hats.

I asked one woman how she did it, and all on Vichy water. She explained that she had mentally pinned down, and by effort of will memorized, the various items of interest which in the comparative peace of the steamer between ports she tabulated, registered and enjoyed. She actually used the word " enjoyed " ! To every man his poison. Personally, I had a small grievance against tourists for the trouble they gave me in finding anywhere to sleep. Hotel accommodation in Jerusalem is totally inadequate in the tourist season, and one wretched night I remember in particular when I had tramped the town till round about midnight to secure for a guinea the use of a box-room and a bed whose springs brought me out in patterns in the morning, being awakened at 7 a.m. by a queue of weary people headed by the proprietor demanding the instant vacation of my room. In vain after a spirited

refusal did I turn over and try to go to sleep again, but the thought of those thirty or forty tired roomless souls unnerved me, and by eight, half dressed and breakfastless—for in the dining-room there was standing room only—I was tramping the town again. It used to be a form of sport with some of us in Jerusalem to go up and dine at the Allenby Hotel on the arrival night of the tourist ships, and watch them sink down with the comfortable air of a lion who has just made a good meal off a Christian martyr. Even at dinner they were not left at peace, for in the middle would arise a gentleman with a square patient chin and a strong American accent, and in a voice that needed no megaphone, make a rapid announcement to much this effect:

“Ladies and gentlemen, Tour No. 15 will assemble in the vestibule at 6.15 a.m. precisely, and will then proceed by *automobile* to see the Tomb of —, the Churches of — and — and — also Nazareth, Bethlehem, Gethsemane and — and — and the place where Jesus died.”

Whereat he would sit down and a score of uplifted forks would continue their course to as many mouths, and occasionally a faint ironical cheer would arise from a few of us frivolous outsiders who were not getting up at daybreak to see anything. Accidents will happen in the best conducted tours. Once, I was told, a man and a maiden starting out unattached, ended by getting married en route—to relieve the monotony, no doubt—and were gravely reprovved by their conductor for exceeding the schedule. Once I believe a man was careless enough to die. I wonder if his conductor admonished the corpse on the same grounds.

Only once, though, did I hear a whimper, and that was from a charming American college boy on vacation, with whom I struck up a chance acquaintance at the Allenby, just before his tour moved north to Tiberius.

"Say, little lady," he said, "I'm lonesome among these dumb-bells. It's too bad I cain't aisk you to drive around with me this afternoon, but I guess my tour won't wait for me. Gee, but they're dumb!"

Jerusalem has started a new phase in her many-sided existence, with the coming and colonization of the British, the first European race for many years to occupy Palestine. For as I have said, the Turks, having once conquered a place, trouble themselves little about the arts of peace, and in any case they are Mohammedans and Orientals, and, though very remotely, of the same common stock as the Jews and the Arabs. But at last the Crescent has given place to the Cross, and we, a conscientious and a painstaking race, dig ourselves and our habits thoroughly and carefully in, wherever we settle.

So the old grey streets of Jerusalem for the first time see shingled heads, and the flutter of smart frocks, and resound sometimes to the strains of rag-time. Not only the inhabitants but the younger people off the big tourist ships want to dance in the evenings. But Jerusalem has its reputation to keep up, and joy, the authorities have decided, must not be unrestrained, therefore in spite of many whispered regrets, dance clubs, or places of public entertainment are "verboden." So incidentally are other things, and any lady of suspected character is instantly deported. Outside private houses, any entertainment that takes place has to be in one or other of the hotels. Hotels in Jerusalem fall far short of the prices charged in them. A man could make a fortune by building a large, comfortable and reasonably priced hotel in the Holy City, and doubtless some one would have done so already but for the water problem. Jerusalem is dependent for its permanent water supply almost entirely on its rainfall, and when it has a dry spell, such as it was undergoing during the weeks I spent there, everyone, even Government House, has to go bathless. If the dry spell continues the situation gets

very serious indeed ; the crops and gardens dry up, and the people suffer considerable privation. Almost my first introduction in Jerusalem was to a young bride of a year, who was nearly in tears because the little garden she had made herself with plants brought out from England was but a wilderness of stones and shrivelled seedlings.

Tourists apart, Jerusalem has formed a pleasant little society of its own, and an invitation to dance will bring parties of cheery souls from the length and breadth of Palestine. Unlike most small communities there are plenty of partners, though usually much married and rather anxious ones, for every one in Palestine seems either to be married to every one else or working in the same department ; and still more is everything that every one does known to every one else, and discussed by every one else, which, I am inclined to think, is apt to spoil the fine flavour of everything else ! Nevertheless, I have memories of very pleasant evenings spent in Jerusalem, where every one is quite extraordinarily kind and hospitable. It is a queer mixture, the life there, or at any rate it seems so to the stranger : a mingling of cocktails and churches, rag-time and ruins, khaki and catafalques. And for me at any rate custom never staled a queer sense of incongruity in walking home through the ancient ghost-haunted by-ways, with the strains of syncopated dance music still ringing in my ears. Of a queer combination of elements is made this little world of ours.

CHAPTER II

NORTHERN PALESTINE

THE northern half of Palestine was about my one sole effort of conscientious sight-seeing in a shamefully haphazard winter, spent in a country that *par excellence* is the adopted home of sightseers. Every visitor to Palestine except myself seemed to be living up to a schedule in which meals, slumber, saints, and monuments were tabulated to the minute, and made their rotatory round with the impartial regularity of the sunrise. Everybody but me carried a Baedeker, and wore sensible shoes, and cameras slung bandolier-wise, and expressions tense with strain and fear that they might have missed something. They lived in a world of potted Bible. I admired them cordially, tho' I did not envy them, I who loafed and wandered as chance or fancy carried me, who caught at wild-goose feathers as they passed, who learnt little and enjoyed much. But I can confidently and proudly assert that in North Palestine I had one week of unmitigated sight-seeing, from early dawn until such time as I dropped exhausted into a variety of hard beds, though my unprecedented labours were lightened by the car and company of a Government official whose kindness and intimate knowledge of the country gave me a glimpse into things and places passed over by the majority of perambulating human itineraries.

I started my tour at Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee, capital of old Galilee, home of Bible lore to the Christians, irreverently known to the Arabs of many generations as the "House of the King of Fleas." Personally, I did not meet more fleas than usual, but the heat that day was asphyxiating, damp and close and oppressive as that of an orchid house.

On the shores of Galilee I felt for the first time that my feet were on holy ground. Except for the town of Galilee itself with its 4,000 Khalouka Jews, its efficient

German hotel, souvenir stalls and hungry-eyed tourists, Galilee is untouched, perfect. Beyond its shining expanse stretch rich plains, the land of milk and honey of olden times, and beyond the plains rise majestically calm mountains. On its banks still sit the fishermen mending their nets, and ragged shepherds tend their flocks while their women wash their clothing in its still waters, that yet sometimes whip to sudden storms, such as once brought fear to the heart of St. Peter. At Capernaum on the north shore one's mind seemed to throw back to nearly two thousand years ago, when those same peasants recognized the Holy Son in the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

As one sat and let one's fancy run riot one could conjure up with an overwhelming sense of actuality, each little intimate scene in the pilgrimage of the Messiah. I know no other spot in the Holy Land that gives the same vivid impression, and my impression some time later was echoed by a young American missionary with whom I compared notes in a wretched little railway train of Anatolia, who, having gone east to trade, found faith and vocation come to him one Easter Sunday on the shores of Galilee. It was, he told me, as if, like St. Paul, his eyes had been blinded by a sudden light.

Our road ran north from Capernaum, several times crossing the Jordan river, that at this point runs strongly and swiftly. And everywhere the rich fertile green plain was transformed to a literal carpet of flowers. Never in my life have I seen such profusion of wild flowers, such a glorious blending of colour, or known the air so fragrant with the blended perfume of millions of tiny blossoms. There were anemones as red as roses, and as pale as lilac, irises of every form and tone, white blossomed wild onions, asphodel and periwinkle, dwarf stocks, and a host of others I could not name. Under a brilliant April sunshine the plain seemed just a vast sheen of prismatic colouring, and the horizon like a living rainbow.

Here and there we passed a group of Jewish shepherds or of bright-eyed Jewish maidens, and increasingly as one went north bands of young Chalutzim, or pioneer farmers, strapping vigorous boys and girls, burnt golden with the sun, sons and daughters maybe of pawnbrokers and moneylenders from the Ghettoes of Europe and America, but a living refutation of the assertion that the Jewish race cannot take to the soil. The plain that to the south lay barren and uncultivated was rich and prosperous looking, with here and there a tiny house ugly in its modernity and unashamed utility, but neat and well-kept and homely.

The road grew wilder as we left the habitations of men behind, degenerating into a mere rocky track as we began to climb the hills. Down in the marshy valley clustered little communities of curious huts made of wicker, that looked like huge inverted baskets, the temporary homes of nomads of the Ghaouâriné tribe, who twice a year drive down their flocks across the distant hills for the sake of the rich pasturage. We had passed Lake Houilé, and left the sun behind in the valley; a faint wet mist struck our faces, and lay like an impalpable veil on the hills that rose before us. Beneath the fingers of tiny gusts of breeze it rose and fell, giving us an occasional glimpse of Mount Hermon that leapt to the sky in the blue distance like a giant wearing a white crown, unapproachable and grandiose. At Metoulah, the most northerly point of Palestine, we turned south again, and, leaving Rosh Pina to the left, made the steep ascent to Safed. The road winding up a steep gradient is one of the finest in all Palestine, though Palestine since the war teems with excellent roads made by our people, and all the way one has the most surprisingly beautiful view over a panorama of rolling green mountains shrouded in mist.

Safed that evening was a fairy village with its groves of dark trees shrouding little white houses, that a misty sunset tinged with coral pink. Below on the slopes of the mountains rolled great vaporous

masses of cloud that seemed to form battalions of great spirits, ghosts of old time, of the men who had fought and pillaged and massacred in the old fierce days, of the gentle-eyed long-robed men who later lived and suffered for their faith, and trod hard, ungrateful paths, spreading their message of peace. From below our little German hotel, where a long-suffering gramophone wheezed out a ragtime with decrepit abandon, from the raggie-taggle of little streets came a medley of voices, muffled by the distance : the staccato barking of rough white dogs, the sound of a little tune played on some small string-instrument by fingers that loved the music they made, and there came too the indescribable smell of an Eastern town, the mixed smell of aromatic herbs, of food fried in oil, and of the fur of animals. Of all the days I spent in Palestine few gave me such a vivid and abiding impression as those spent in the uplands of Galilee, such a cognate vision of the past, of which is born the present and the future, of the meaning of a simple religion, bereft of its worldly trappings, its mummeries, and its dissensions, and the power of that great Son of a Canaanite blacksmith who so changed the history of the world.

The road down from Safed, if taken too quickly, for the moment knocks romance out of the traveller. As I have said it is excellent, and in an average car one drops from the approximate height of 4,000 to the level of Galilee which, though not so low as the Dead Sea, is several hundred feet below sea level. The effects are the same as on the Jerusalem-Jericho road, only more so ; and arrived at Capernaum in the fairy-like garden of the little hospice, that smothered in bouganvillia overhangs the lake, I sat and gasped for the breath that seemed suddenly to have left me, with an agonizing pain in the head, and a drumming in my ears like the sound of many waters.

Another German hotel gave us shelter at Nazareth, luckily enough, for though German cooking is heavy,

German beds are clean. Nazareth is a place one should visit with a guide book, and in a guide-book frame of mind, for apart from Biblical associations it has little to catch the eye or the imagination. It is a medley of guides, tourists, note-books and cameras, and a roughly made legend flaunting itself in the main street, that first catches one's eye as one drives in, announcing "Yorkshire Jimmie's Bar," the alcoholic relic, I believe, of the war. Samaria, now commonly called Sabastia, a little further on, has a charm almost completely neutralized by the annoyance of a gang of impudent loafers aged from six to sixteen, who pester one's life out to buy faked antiques and spurious coins, as one vainly tries to enjoy the rather beautiful church of St. John, work of the Crusaders, and some old Roman remains. Apart from its antiquities, the little crumbling town standing on a small steep hill is pure Arab in design and architecture, and reminded me of many a little city I have seen in the northern Sahara.

From Samaria we rushed to Nablous in time for lunch, and contrary to expectation lunched well. Nablous deserves more tourist attention than it usually gets, though perhaps less associated with Biblical history than other places: it is the spot that most pleases the eye, with its tortuous mazes of vaulted and arcaded streets, full of shadowed mystery and ocular poems of light and shade, its vivid bazaars that swarm as does an ant heap with noisy multi-coloured Arabs.

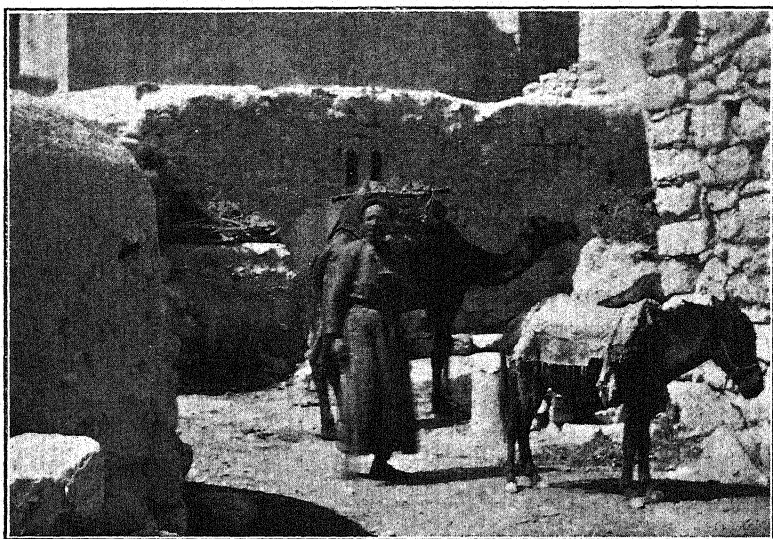
The Near and Middle East has been called the "Birthplace of the World." Now it seems more in the nature of a mausoleum, or rather the Ante-chamber of Death, where linger the survivors of dying races and religions, who in another century will have passed gently into oblivion. One of these relics is the tiny colony of the Samaritans, whose handful of survivors cling pathetically to existence, in their sanctuary in the south-west corner of Nablous. This sanctuary dates back from years 700 B.C. when a quantity of Jews, having been taken prisoner by the Assyrians, the

Samaritans installed themselves in Nablous, then called Shechem, and refused to move in spite of hatred and persecution. The Twelve Apostles even were forbidden by Jesus to go near the heretics of Samaria, who were said to be possessed of devils. In the days of Justinian a number of these Samaritans were exiled to Babylon and Persia for eighty-one years, at the end of which time they returned to what they believed to be the real Jerusalem. From mutual hatred no intermarriage took place between them and the Jews, by reason of which the Samaritans suffered physically, and declined in number till there are now only about 200 of them left in the world. Men preponderate ; indeed, they told me themselves that they only possess half a dozen women, and of late years have tried to obtain Jewish brides, but in vain, for they are physically and financially but poor propositions as prospective bridegrooms. Their end cannot be far off.

We reached their quarter by a devious but fascinating route, through a labyrinth of dark overhanging streets. At a small door in a *cul-de-sac* my guide stopped and rang. The ring was answered by one of the most arresting figures I have ever seen : a man of about thirty-five, well over six feet, with a narrow-shouldered and emaciated figure, dressed in a long close-fitting garment of yellow brocade, and a high turban. It was his head that told the history of the Samaritans. It was large and massive, with handsome, regular features, curling black beard and huge black eyes. It was a magnificent head, intelligent and refined, structurally perfect, and like the framework of the body should have been that of a magnificent man ; but his great eyes were drawn and lustreless, his skin was smooth and lifeless as wax with a transparent yellowish tinge, and seemed drawn too tightly over the big perfect bones ; his voice was gentle, and his hands pale and effeminate. It was like looking upon the wraith of a man—a man upon whom, as the Africans say, a spirit has looked, sucking the

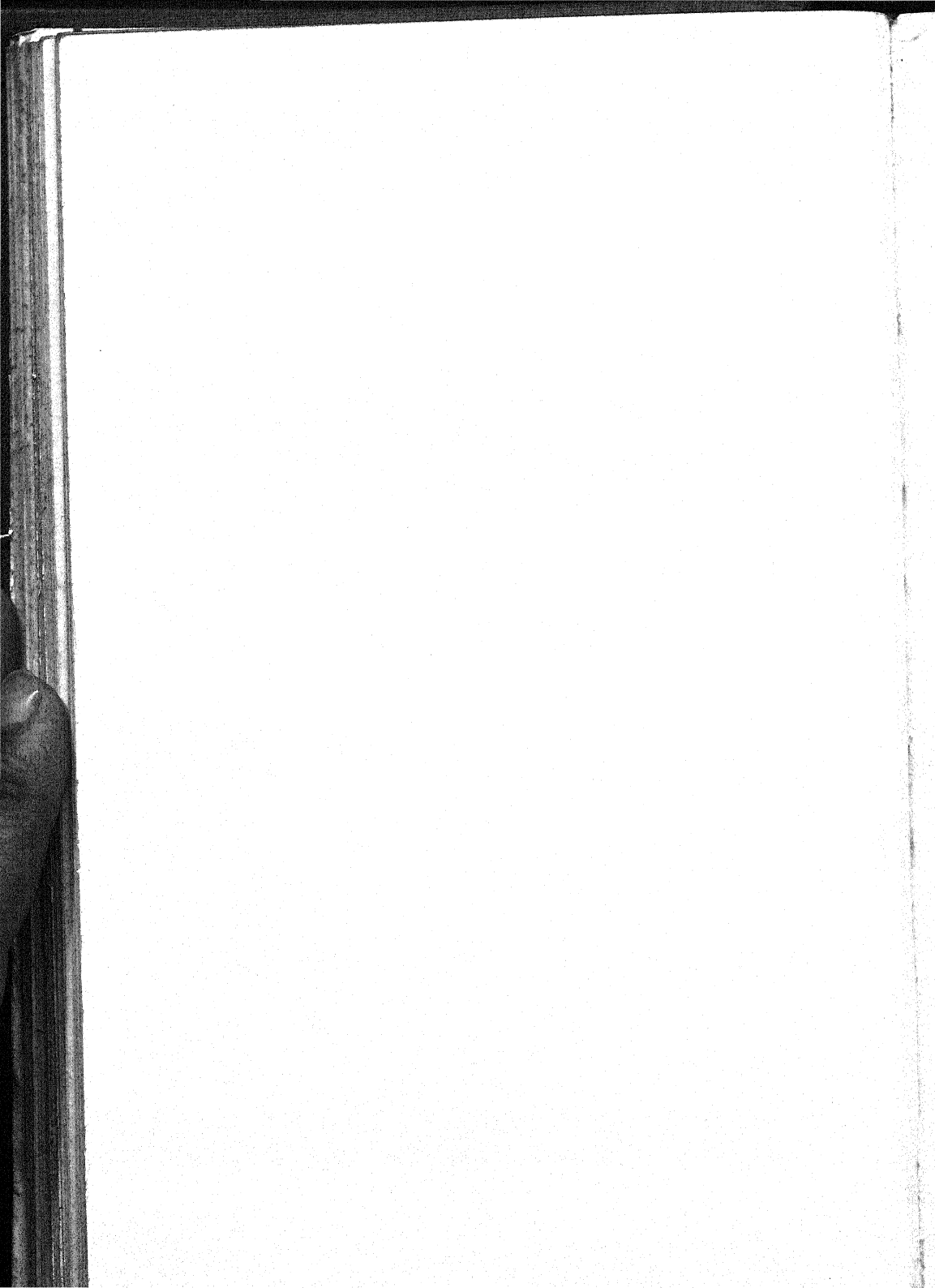


HIGH PRIEST OF THE SAMARITANS AT NABLOUS.



A STREET IN SAMARIA.

Facing page 94



blood from the veins, drawing away the life. All the life, all the fire of humanity was gone, leaving only the husk ; his whole personality gave an uncanny impression of being not altogether of this world.

This wraith-like giant took us to his father, the Ya'koub or High Priest, who welcomed us with a grave smile, and introduced us to others like unto himself. For a while we talked politely, and almost one felt as if one should lower one's voice : it was like moving in some kind of intermediate world. The High Priest was one of the handsomest old men I had ever seen, and seemed to have in him a more vital spark of life than the younger ones. They took us to their Synagogue, *Kenîset es Sâmîré*, a small, dim, empty, whitewashed chamber, and from behind the simple altar they took a kind of double cylinder of rolled parchment wrapped in green Persian silk. It was their Sepher Torah, the first three books of Moses, which they told me was over 3,000 years old, though I believe it is actually anterior to the Christian era. Their prayers date back to the twelfth century, and they are, I gathered, strict monotheists, holding in anathema all kinds of images, or anything that lends human attributes to God. Their feasts are the same as those of the Jews, and three times a year they make pilgrimage to Mount Gerizim, on the day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles ; and at Easter they sacrifice seven white lambs on the summit of Gerizim. They believe in the Resurrection and in the Day of Judgment, and they wait for the coming of the Messiah, whom they esteem on a level of sanctity with Moses.

They live in a kind of little walled city of their own, shut off from the rest of the town, that is to say, from the Arabs, for Jews are hated in Nablous. Their houses are bare and clean, and devoid of any luxury, for they are miserably poor. There was a rush and a scurry at the sight of visitors, and I was greeted everywhere with gentle voices and friendly smiles.

The two women that I saw were young, with eyes of a brilliant blue that shone with startling effect in their pale olive faces, and they would have been pretty but for their anæmic slenderness and drawn shadowed skin. Even the children looked bloodless, except one plump cheery mite of about three years who alone seemed to retain a vestige of vitality ; a beautiful, curious race, product of in-breeding, dying slowly for lack of the vital forces, their little city is like a world of phantoms — over everyone and everything lies like a veil a sense of languor and inertia. It was like living a poem of Maeterlinck. Its people reminded me of the lotus eaters of Homer's Sleepy Isle :

"Dark faces pale against that rosy flame . . .
His voice was thin as voices from the grave,
And deep asleep he seemed but all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make."

It was with a faint sense of shock, half jarring, half refreshing, that we left the little dead city, and slipped out once more into the jostling vivid life of Nablous.

My sight-seeing tour was approaching its end, as we turned back north to Haifa.

Haifa is prettier approached from the sea than from the land, a mass of white houses nestling among dark evergreen trees, flanked by the great bulk of Mount Carmel, "Mountain of God," whose beauty has been renowned since the days when Isaiah sang of "the excellencies of Carmel." Haifa breathes commerce, and if the projected scheme for making a new harbour is materialized will be, it is said, the most important seaport of Palestine. There is a large German colony that bears fruit in the form of neat, businesslike roads and houses, and a smooth, plump, prosperous population. It is a really beautiful drive up the face of the mountain with a breath-taking loveliness of blue dimpled sea, dotted with tiny toy ships. Another joyous ride is along the shore to Acre where one races along the smooth, hard sand, spray in one's face, and the wheels of the car washed sometimes by an incoming wave.

Acre is just a little town out of an old fairy tale, a fortress tiny but fierce, with wave-washed walls, crumbling and dark, that have shaken beneath the battering-rams of the Greeks and Arabs, of Saladin, Guy de Lusignan, Richard Cœur de Lion, and Napoleon. St. Paul in his day visited her; the galleys of the Genoese, the Venetians, and the Pisanis, anchored in her waters. Acre was a romance till I was beguiled into spending an hour in her prison and then for me it seemed that all the sunshine of the day had been blotted out. Infinitely grim is the Acre prison, where the worst and most violent of the criminals of Palestine are sent. Automatically one seems to abandon hope as one crosses the drawbridge into the great looming shadow of the fort. There is always something horribly grimly suggestive in the practical neat simplicity of a gallows. When the latter had been shown me, and the admirable efficiency of its workings demonstrated, I was taken as a natural sequence to the cell of two condemned prisoners. Poor lost souls, each one of them faced death composedly, but with a difference. One, a sickly mongrel Arab, who from his physiognomy could have been born to no other lot than that of a criminal, brooded with hate but without fear. He had hated life, he resented the idea of death. His hate worked like poison in him, as under his breath he kept up a muttering of mingled prayers and curses. The other, a Druse, a splendid specimen with broad, open face and honest blue eyes that once had burnt with a fierce joy of a kill, seemed indifferent, utterly composed and serene; even he smiled with dignity at the sight of a strange woman's face.

Religion and roses! A short hour's drive up Carmel takes one to the stronghold of one of the most interesting of the many religions that find sanctuary in Palestine, that of the Baha'i, that its disciples call not a religion, but a movement. It came originally from Persia, birthplace of many faiths, where the forerunner was a young man nicknamed Bab, meaning

the Gate, who, like St. John the Baptist, prophesied the coming of "One greater than himself," and who in consequence died the death of a martyr. The "one greater" was Baba'u'llah, meaning the Glory of God, and he too suffered persecution and was banished to Tabriz in Persia, and later to Acre, where he wrote a book of Revelations, and finally died in 1892. Later his remains were exhumed by his disciples and re-interred on the lower slopes of Carmel. His gospel was carried on by his son, Abdul Baha, the "Servant of Baha," who was kept prisoner by the Turks till the overthrow of their old regime in 1908, when he took advantage of his freedom to travel the world over, expounding his creed in Egypt, Europe and America. His son, Shoghi Effendi, succeeded him four years ago, and on Shoghi Effendi I was taken to call. He is a most charming young man, looking about thirty, small, slight featured, Persian in his general appearance, dressed in sober black robes, with composed and courteous manner. He seems to talk every known language, and spoke to me with willing fluency and conviction of the aims of his movement.

He received me and my escort in a large semi-Oriental room, walled with divans, and carpeted with beautiful Persian rugs, he regaled us with tea and fruit and cigarettes, and took us round his walled garden, lovely in the manner of an English garden, with smooth green lawns, pergolas and masses of gorgeous roses.

The Bahai is a religion of peace, and peace was the keynote of its sanctuary. Even the servants moved with a quick gentleness, seeming to serve one with pleasure, almost affection. In the midst of the acrid, all-against-all atmosphere of Palestine, it was a rest to stroll leisurely round the little green garden, while its owner ran on in his smooth cultured voice, and pulled the thorns from a huge bunch of roses that a queer little wizened smiling Jap gardener gathered for me. Truly a brotherhood of peace are

the Bahais, who have sought to sow the seeds of universal concord in the midst of turbulence, and to change the hearts of men. Their creed is Utopian. Not through force, they say, can equity and prosperity reign in the world. "It is manifest," said Abdul Baha, "that the surest means towards the well-being and prosperity of men, and towards the highest object of civilization and the liberty of the citizen, is love and friendship, and the most intimate union between all human races." Not by the violent methods of the Socialist or the Bolshevik is the liberty of the citizen to be achieved, though the cry of the Bahais is "Work for all, no idle rich and no idle poor, without respect to persons," and the abolition of the extreme poverty and wealth, but through a regeneration of the soul, a renaissance of world harmony where "work in the spirit of service is worship."

The Bahais seek, through the worship of love, to reconcile all the various elements that in our imperfect state, like oil and water, have refused to mix. Religion they say, must go hand in hand with science; faith and reason must be in full accord for "all are leaves of one tree, flowers of one garden." They dream of universal peace, of international arbitration, an international Parliament, and an international language. They urge the equality of the sexes, equal rights, privileges and opportunities. "The world of humanity," said Abdul Baha, "has two wings, one is woman and the other man. Not till both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not till the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be." This blessed state of things is to be attained not from without, but from within, by the independent investigation of reality, by the casting away of the "Ragged and outworn garment of a thousand years ago."

Much of this Shoghi Effendi expounded to me as

we strolled round his rose-walled garden, with the picturesque metaphor and simile of his Persian forebears. Higher up on the slopes of Carmel, I visited their shrine, that one can neither call church nor temple, but that they call by a word in their language which means the "Place where one visits." It is set in another lovely garden of terraces, running down the steep hill-side, English also in its conception, with broad flagged paths, and formal flower beds, smooth green lawns and more roses, overlooking a wonderful panorama of blue sea and sky, and the rocky promontory of Carmel. It contains two large simple rooms carpeted each with a huge brilliantly coloured Persian rug, that must be worth a thousand golden sovereigns, and in one of them stands the tomb of Baha'u'llah, whose dim loftiness is penetrated by an occasional shaft of sunlight. No set services are held there, but the disciples come and sit and meditate, and steep and refresh their tired souls in peace and harmony. Many pilgrims come from Russia and America, from India, and Germany. In America especially the Bahai movement has made a number of converts, and there are numerous centres where Bahai missionaries from Carmel preach their doctrine. Each year come boatloads of Americans to Carmel ; many of the converts are rich, and give magnificent presents to the cause in cash or in kind, and the Persians bring the choicest of their carpets.

They are a lovable and a fascinating people, the Bahais : idealists who have dreamed a dream of a peace that passes all understanding, who seek to bring relief to restless unhappy human hearts, who, by co-operation, would replace competition, and blend all races, religions, nations and classes into one harmonious whole. A beautiful dream, too good, it is feared, to come true in our present state of imperfection and atavistic crudity, but a dream that it is pleasant to come in contact with, as I did, for a couple of hours, on a blazing April afternoon.

A little to the south of Haifa in the Jewish colony of Zichron Yacob, a tragic and a noble character played her part in the history of Palestine during the war, and died for the cause of the Allies. She was Sarah Aronsohn, whose family had been one of a little colony of Roumanian Jews under the patronage and protection of Baron Edmond de Rothschild at Zichron Yacob. Her brother, Aaron Aronsohn, and his friend, Absalom Feinberg, a Palestinian Jew engaged to Sarah's sister, both of them intellectual idealists who had studied in France and America, conceived it as their life's mission to help shake off the hated yoke of the Turk. To this end and in the face of infinite dangers and difficulties, they attempted to make their way by separate and devious routes to Egypt, to offer their services to the British. Disguised as a Bedouin, Aronsohn was arrested by the Turks, sent to Germany, whence he escaped to Copenhagen, and embarked for America. In the North Sea to his great joy he was arrested by a British patrol, and taken to London, where he persuaded the authorities to let him enlist in our Army on the Egyptian front.

Meanwhile Feinberg confided his design to his fiancée's sister, Sarah, at that time about thirty, who had made an unhappy marriage with a Bulgarian Jew, and leaving him had returned to her home at Zichron Yacob. Before he started to join Aronsohn in Egypt, Feinberg made her promise in the event of misadventure, to carry on the cause. Shortly after he was killed, while trying to cross the Sinai desert, and Aronsohn and Sarah, with a compatriot Lichansky, as go-between, carried on, for some time successfully, a system of espionage for the British. At Athlit on the coast just south of Haifa a British cruiser used to land men by canoe, at dead of night, to receive the information obtained by Sarah. At last the visits of our boat became rare, the Turks had learnt that a political secret service existed in the neighbourhood, their Jewish neighbours bore a grudge for the danger

into which she was running them, and the position of Sarah became perilous indeed. Time and again she wrote agonized letters begging that help might be sent, but for some mysterious reason got no reply.

On the last day of the Feast of Succoth, the week in which the Jews commemorate their wanderings in the desert, fell calamity. In the feasting and dance Sarah, tormented with anxiety, alone took no part. In the midst of the merrymaking, the music stopped on a sudden discord, for a group of Turkish horsemen had ridden up from Nazareth, and stopped before the Aronsohn house. Sarah, in spite of threats, refused to betray the whereabouts of her comrade, Lichansky, whereupon the soldiers seized upon her aged father, tied him up and, forcing Sarah and her young brother to keep him covered with guns, beat him to death, but without making him betray his friends. Next day the soldiers seized upon Sarah herself, and for five days in succession tied her upright to the door, and tortured her and mutilated her. They beat her, tore out her nails, and placed red-hot bricks on her breast and feet, yet she did not speak. On the sixth day it was decided to take her to Nazareth, and her last few moments alone were occupied in writing, in a hand that trembled with pain but not with fear, a few lines to a friend asking that her death should be avenged.

When the soldiers came to carry her off, she asked permission to retire for a moment to the adjoining room, where taking a small revolver she had kept concealed, put it to her mouth. . . . The Turks when they had broken down the door found her writhing in a pool of blood. To the doctor who was hurriedly summoned, she only prayed to be allowed to die, and even the rough soldiers, touched by her bravery, left her in peace. It took her three days to die, and her only fear was that in her moments of delirium she might let some friend's name escape. She welcomed death with a smile. A few days later the British army arrived triumphant.

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN PALESTINE

A SHORT time after my arrival at Jerusalem found me on a tour of Southern Palestine, not such a methodical, painstaking tour as I made to the land of milk and honey, but a disjointed darting to and fro, that defies chronological tabulation, but that led me first of all, as does all train travelling, in Palestine, to Ludd.

Ludd, the Lod of the Old Testament, so the historians tell us, was a town of much magnitude and importance that before the time of Christ broke away from the dependency of Samaria, and after the fall of Jerusalem became a centre of religious education, and later still was one of the many cities that Saladin thought it worth his while to destroy. Now Ludd to the traveller seems merely a place where one changes trains. I don't know why, but apparently you cannot make the smallest train journey in Palestine, in whatever direction, without changing at Ludd! Sometimes you have a rush to make your connection, and sometimes you don't, but always you see someone you know, gossiping to someone else that you know. Especially entertaining is it when you happen to be changing trains at the moment that the Cairo express passes through. The carriages with their luxurious complement of dining-car and sleepers, look so luxurious compared with the thing you yourself have alighted from, the occupants so opulent and cosmopolitan, and you know that positively they won't have to change trains till they reach the Suez Canal next day, for which you envy them. And there is always the exciting possibility that someone distinguished may be passing through, perhaps even a

Royalty, or the possibility more exciting still, that someone you know is on his way to have a beano in Cairo. For beanos in every country depend upon their range of possibility. In Palestine, beano No. 1 is Cairo; beano No. 2 is Port Said; and beano No. 3—a C3 sort of beano, when funds or time are short—is Beyrout or Damascus, where the French exchange gets you comparatively on your toes for a very moderate sum.

Jaffa, a short half-hour from Ludd, is another place it is very hard to avoid when touring Palestine. Boats, trains and roads all seem to lead you there sooner or later even though at the start your head was obstinately turned the other way. It is hard to avoid in more senses than one, as I learnt on my third and last visit, when I was trying to leave Palestine altogether; for though Jaffa from time immemorial has been the port of Jerusalem, of all Palestine, and of the great Middle East itself, the port has a difficult and uncertain anchorage, and often it happens, as it happened to me, that, if the weather is stormy, steamers for Syria or Turkey cannot put in, and one has to make a long tedious expensive journey by road and rail—always, of course, changing at Ludd—instead of enjoying a really charming sea-trip at half the price.

And Jaffa itself does not keep one's attention for long, and belies its ancient name of Joppa, which the Jews say meant "The Beautiful." It has none of the charming surrounding scenery of Haifa, lying on a flat sandy foreshore, and in externals is just the untidy jumble of an ordinary Arab seaport, with long straggling streets, a noisy market-place, and a few fair to moderate shops. Its port and customs accommodation are entirely inadequate to cope with its considerable shipping, and yet Jaffa, as capital of an old Phœnician colony, has made and seen a lot of history in her time, in the days of Solomon, and Sennacherib, and the Crusaders. It was at the port

of Joppa that Hiram, King of Tyre, landed the wood for the construction of the Temple ; it was from near Joppa that the unfortunate Jonah started on surely the least hygienic and uncomfortable sea-trip ever made by human explorer ; Joppa also figured in mythology, and was the birthplace of the legend of the fair Andromeda, daughter of Cassiopeia, who was chained to a rock to make a meal for the sea serpent, and was rescued by Perseus ; and until well on in the Middle Ages the curious could see the chains that were said to have bound her naked defenceless beauty. Jaffa or Joppa, in modern irreverent times has even been the inspiration of a limerick concerning a "society cropper" too well-known to need repetition !

Jaffa is anti-Semitic in feeling, and there is occasional brawling in the little warren of dark streets near the market place, where the tough characters of the town have their habitation. And yet but a stone's throw from Jaffa, overlapping its boundaries almost, Tel Aviv, "the only Jewish city in the world," has sprung up like a mushroom in the night, Tel Aviv, that most curious little city, so new, so little known by the world at large, but that is far too interesting, in my opinion, not to be given a whole chapter to itself. But Jews, especially German Jews, know how to run hotels, and the only adequate hotel in Jaffa is quaintly enough called the "New Jerusalem," and all its rooms, instead of being numbered, are called after the name of some old Jewish saint. On my first visit to Jaffa I slept with Daniel, on my second with Hosea, and my third with Esaias, who seemed to me good and saintly chaperones !

I wonder who is really and truly the oldest person in the world ? Certainly older than any I have ever seen is Hadj Taffir, who lives in a little village on the way to Jaffa. No one knows exactly how old he is, but he has been, so to speak, the oldest inhabitant in Palestine in the youth of the Oldest Inhabitant, and

if his memory serves him right he cannot be much less than 140 years old. He asserts that he was born in Mecca, and that in the year 1799 he was brought by his family to Palestine. He further claims to have been one of a crowd that watched Napoleon march by Jaffa. I have only once before in my life seen a terribly old man, in a little English country village, and he, blind, deaf and infirm, a mere living husk of a man, gave me an uncanny feeling in my bones, a melancholy impression of the hideous tragedy of age, of the cruelty of the heavy hand of time. Not so Hadj Taffir. Tall, rather bent, with leathery wrinkled face and bright eyes, he looks between eighty and ninety, not more, with full possession of his faculties, and enjoys life, taking an interest in everything. A few years ago only, he travelled all the way to Trans-Jordan during the visit of King Hussein. He has, I am told, an enormous appetite which he is able to gratify thanks to the curious phenomenon of a third set of sprouting teeth. He has none of the usual theories concerning his longevity; he neither advocates apples, teetotalism, smoking nor non-smoking, but takes himself supremely as a matter of course. He is indeed proud of his age, and, already well-to-do, supplements his income by selling his photograph to tourists. He put off marriage till he was over seventy, and was several times a father, and only a short time ago he married again, a comparatively young woman. Ribald gossip had it that again he was the father of a new baby, but this he categorically denies. With Hadj Taffir as with many Arabs, one wonders indeed if they need ever die at all. They are born with superb physiques, few nerves, live healthily and abstemiously in a good climate, without over-eating, drinking or smoking, and their temperament and religion, with its motto of "It is the will of Allah," both save them from much of the wear and tear of worry, ambition, and irritation that fray the constitutions of us Westerners.

One day I was taken to lunch with some Jewish magnates at Richon-le-Sion, a big Jewish colony about twelve miles from Jaffa, that throughout the lifetime of Mr. Meyrowitz, its founder, has been the centre of the wine trade in Palestine. For miles, or so it seemed, I tramped round the vast subterranean cellars and vats from which, they told me, come nearly a million and a half gallons of wine each year. Most of the year's output, it seemed to me, my kind host tried to pour down my throat at lunch afterwards. With every course, and there were eight of them, a fresh brand of Richon wine had to be sampled. He would take no denial, and I tried to make a brave and appreciative show with a thimbleful of each. But it was a hot and steamy day, the sort of day one would have chosen to lunch off a tankard of orangeade and a wing of spring chicken, and by the sixth or seventh course of rich food and wine, I began to wonder whether my face was assuming the brick-red and congested appearance of the dozen or so other lunchers, and for the rest of the afternoon I felt like a sausage with too tight a skin.

Feeling more than ever like a sausage I was walked to the near-by encampment of Yemenites. The Yemenites form the poorest section of the Jewish community in Jerusalem, not drawing the "Khalouka." Here at Richon they have been treated with infinite generosity by their richer compatriots, for the Jews are assuredly the most generous people in the world to their own folk. To be a Jew in an alien city where there are already Jews, however poor, means a certainty of food and shelter.

I remember once befriending, to the extent of a small loan of money, a destitute American Jew, who, through no particular fault of his own, had got stranded way up in the West African Bush. After an effusion of grateful thanks he looked at me with a puzzled air, and finally he said :

"You do not look Jewish. Are you one?" and when I answered in the negative, he continued, "You know I'm one?"

"Of course," I answered, for there was no mistaking his Semitic cast of face and figure. "But what has that got to do with it?" He grinned slightly as he answered with a pronounced American accent:

"Well, we Jews aren't popular out here, or anywhere for that matter! When someone is kind to us it generally means that he is a Jew too, for we always give to one another."

To return to Richon, the Yemenites have been well done by their compatriots with a smart little community of commodious neat white houses in little gardens. In the midst of it stands a tiny Synagogue, bare, but immaculately kept, rather touching in its rough simplicity. The country of their origin is Yemen, many miles across the desert to the south-east of the Red Sea, the country, it is said, from where the great Pharaoh sent for magicians to help him cope with Moses and his miracles, and where the Yemenite Jews believe it is their mission to await the coming of the Messiah. Sometimes a prophet arises, bidding certain persons or families go north to Palestine, whereupon the elect straightway start forth without money or transport, or assistance, with nothing but a blind exalted belief in the holiness of their mission, across an infinity of desolate dangerous miles. And it is said that no pilgrim travelling to the Promised Land in obedience to such a decree has ever suffered death or misadventure, or failed to arrive safe and sound. Certainly such a pilgrimage deserves its reward.

They have brought with them a copy of their Pentateuch which is kept behind the altar in their Synagogue. It is written on parchment over two thousand years old, and so fragile that the Rabbi asked us not even to touch it lest it should fall to pieces.

Besides Richon and Tel Aviv there are other

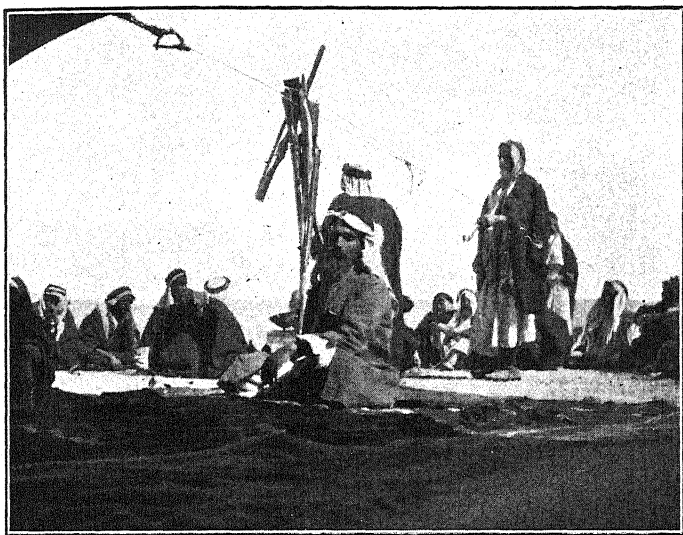
Jewish colonies near Jaffa, Petah Tikvah to the north, Rehoboth and Bir Jacob to the south. These southern colonies are mostly older than those of the north, and their population is largely recruited from Russia and southern Europe. Started originally by rich Jews they suffered severely when the original capital dwindled, till rescued by Baron de Rothschild. There is a good deal of Tartar blood in the remote origin of those from south Russia, of which one can occasionally see traces in their descendants. Indeed in all the Jewish colonies, in especial, Tel Aviv, one can trace racial traits of the many countries of the Jews' adoption. These Jews of southern colonies are not quite so keenly prejudiced against the Arabs. Indeed, they have to a large extent employed Arab labour on their farms, and the more advanced of them believe that the Arab and the Jew may eventually lie down together, like the proverbial lion and lamb, and that the former will in time, of his own accord, play a practical if subsidiary part in their dream kingdom of the future.

From Jaffa the road runs south, and ever the south calls me, as do ships. As I cannot stand and watch an unknown ship setting sail for some unknown port without longing to be on her, so I cannot see a road that runs south without longing to travel it. From the south the sun calls, and the people and the things of the sun, strange and violent things and people. South go the old trade routes, the caravan routes, and the routes of ships; from the oldest age, men have gone south in search of gold and women, and glory and adventure. In the south lay El Dorado, and in the south the Elysian fields. On the cold shores of the north one can stand and watch the great roads that run south, tempting, beckoning, terrifying and yet fascinating.

Through Jaffa runs the railroad that through forests and swamps and sandy wastes, through tropic sun and deep snow, one day will connect the world, from the

Cape to London in its iron hand. It runs also past Beersheba the most southerly point of interest in Palestine, of authorized and allowable interest that is, for as elsewhere in our competent and well-drilled possessions, They Who Must be Obeyed entangle the feet of the would-be wanderer with infinite precautionary restrictions, as I discovered when I expressed a desire to visit places on the black list of our Palestine authorities. "Find out what Tommy is doing and tell him not to do it," seems to be the motto of British officials, and "Verboten" will surely be found written on their hearts when they are dead. There have been times when I have vindictively hoped that St. Peter will hang out the same sign when the time comes for them to make their well-deserved entry into Heaven!

A quicker and more definitely picturesque route to the south, and by which I returned, is by Hebron, which claims the distinction of having been the birthplace of Adam, also the burial place of Isaac and Jacob, and for seven years, the capital of King David, after the death of Saul. It lies in a narrow valley between high hills, and a short walk takes one to the famous oak under which Abraham pitched his tents, and lived for a while after the death of Sarah. Certainly the oak looks so old that one can really believe as everyone confidently tells one that it is the original tree of Abraham. I have rarely seen a tree so enormous in girth, and it looks so ancient that, as with the patriarch Hadj Taffir, one wonders at it having survived so long, why it should ever die at all, seeming a thing that has been overlooked by the arbitrary law of life, and forgotten by time. And like Hadj Taffir it enjoys its life, and yearly produces a fine crop of acorns that in reckless profusion the guide tears down and presents as souvenirs to visitors. Near by in the same grilled enclosure its son, a flourishing youngster of several hundred years, handsomely carries on the tradition.



IN THE TENT OF MASALIA BOU SAIDA ; ASLOUJ.



AUTHOR AT JERUSALEM.

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In the neighbourhood of Hebron in ancient times, there was a legend probably based on a vague reference in the Book of Joshua to a race of giants of enormous size, and Deuteronomy also speaks of them. There are still giants in the hinterland of the Ammân Hills, smaller giants, but not less than seven feet high, that from time to time, generally in isolated families, have been seen by accredited white witnesses and who some theorists believe to be the posterity of these fabulous beings.

South of Jaffa the scenery changes. The golden fields of the north are far behind, and the stony ground of the middle section, and the train labours through a region of sand dunes. It passes through Ashdod, that with Gaza, Ascalon, Ekron, and Gath, made up the five towns of the Philistines. It leaves on the right Ascalon where Herod was born, and where the pagans of those days made a long and bitter stand against Christianity. It makes a definite halt at Gaza, whose white population consists of an officer of police and his wife, who most kindly entertained me. They are oddly African in character, these little lost moribund cities, and so too is Beersheba that one reaches in a few hours by car inland from Gaza, over one of the world's worst roads.

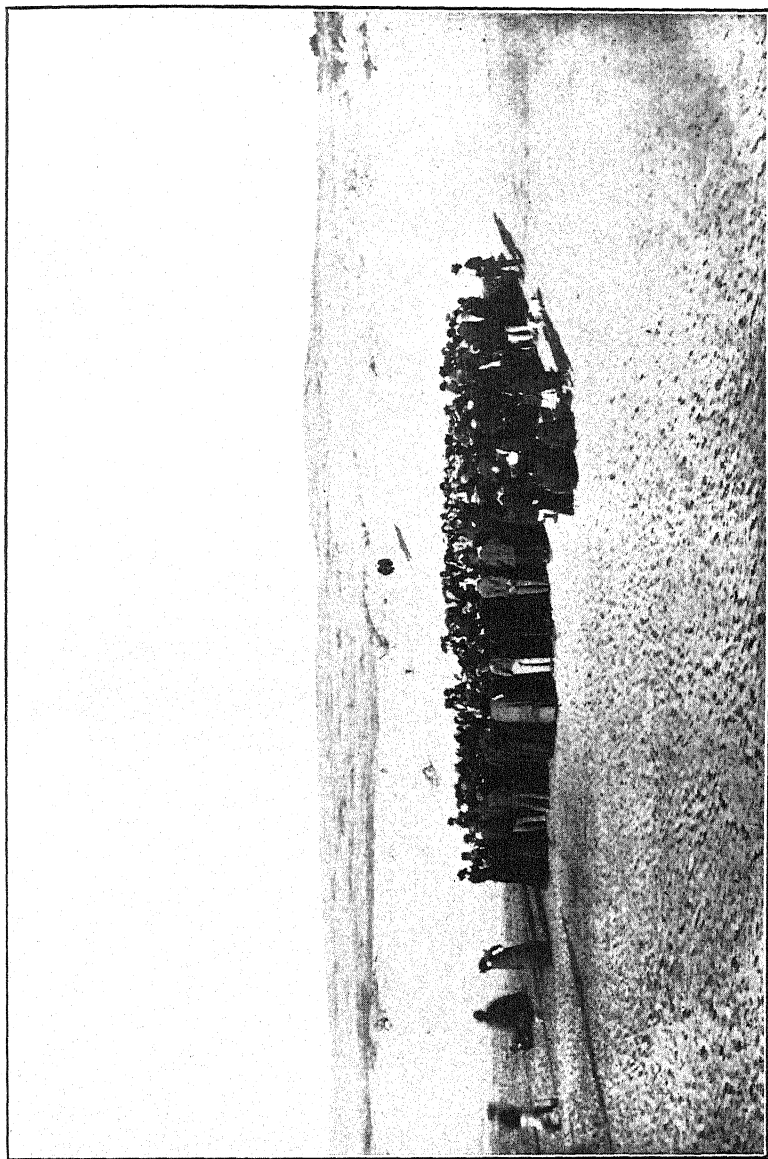
And all along the world's worst road I was beguiled with thrilling stories that beat the pirate stories of one's childhood to a frazzle ; of the days, a few years ago, before our occupation imposed a fair degree of law and order, when all this waste country was a happy hunting ground for nomad brigands, men who knew neither law nor fear, who rode like centaurs, lived like foxes and fought like fiends, to whom raiding and pillage and robbery were the breath of life. The same waste lands, arid and desolate, stretch away to the shores of the Dead Sea, country forgotten by God, and as yet forbidden to the traveller, trodden only by the nomad and his cousins, the jackal and the vulture, good undertakers, and by an occasional band

of British police or gendarmerie, on whose energy the sun never sets. Beersheba with its one street of ramshackle box-like shops is unimpressive, a mere excrescence of the sun and sand of which it is made. It was a Friday, the Mohammedan Sunday, that I spent there, and the day was made hideous by the religious enthusiasts who thronged the minaret of the little Mosque shouting the Koran in a dozen different keys.

While I was at Beersheba I was bidden to a feast given in my honour at Asludj, an hour or two to the south, by the Sheikh Masalia Bou Said, an old nomad chieftain who after a long lifetime of brigandage has submitted with a good enough grace to British supremacy. For twenty miles or so, we bumped across raw desert in a stout-hearted Ford car that made noisy light of sand dunes, rocks, and ravines, till after some searching—for the nomads change their ground from time to time, to suit climate or convenience—we perceived the encampment of our host, a cluster of big black tents under the shelter of a low hill. Keen eyes had already spotted us. A small cavalcade of horsemen rushed out to meet us with a clatter of accoutrements, shouting and brandishing their swords, and escorted us back to the encampment, galloping round and round us, showing off their horsemanship and raising an asphyxiating cloud of dust.

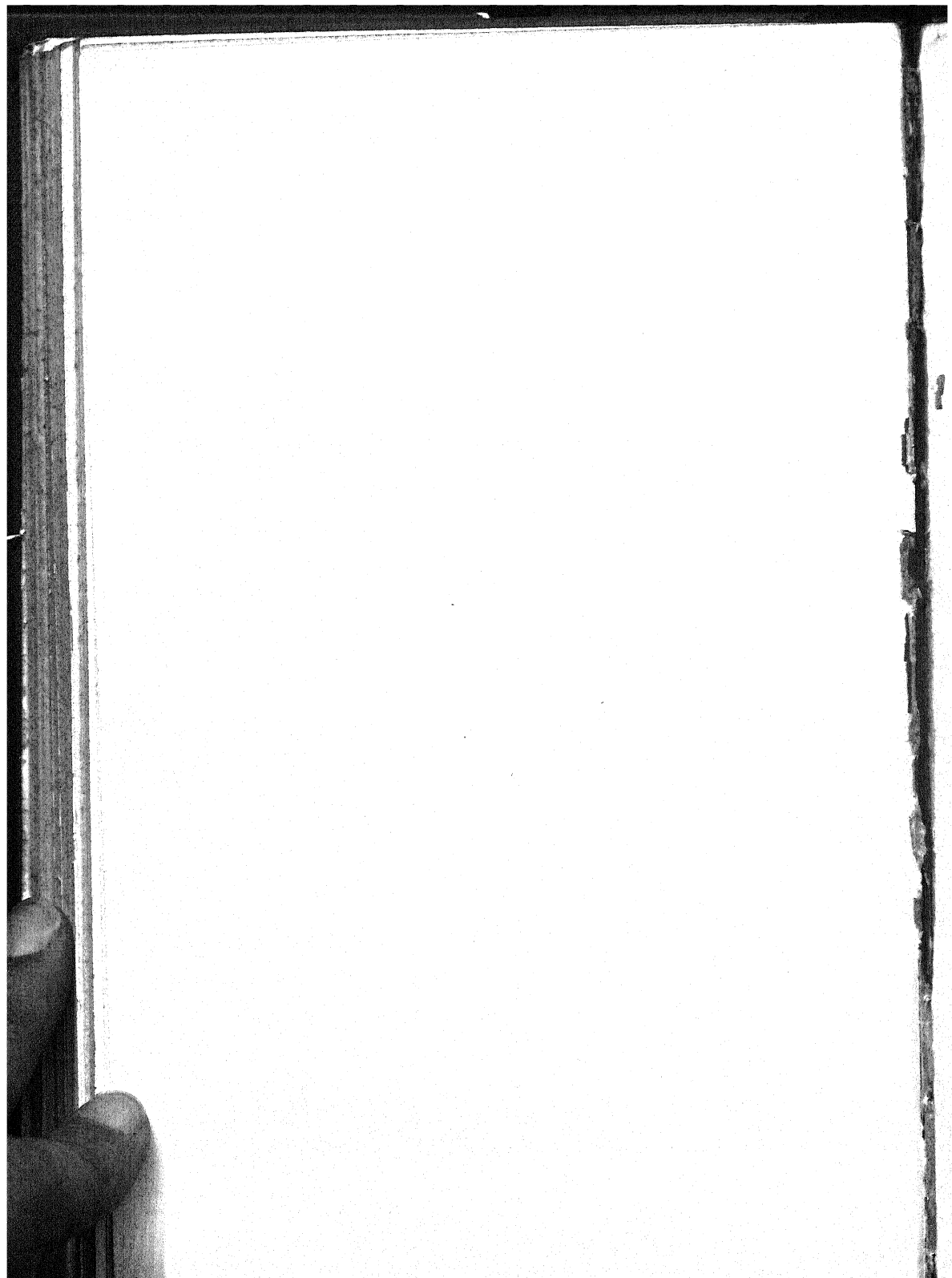
The chief received us with dignity and cordiality; a magnificent-looking old robber, at least seventy, but active as a kitten, with the face of a Patriarch and the eyes of an eagle. But his clothes were not in keeping with the comparative magnificence of his tent, or of his sons and followers, for he has the personal and rare idiosyncrasy of never wearing his best clothes for visitors.

"I like you to see me as I am," he says proudly, "as a man of peace, not as a man of war, to strike awe with my grandeur." After an infinity of tiny



FIRST MEETING OF THE PURCHASERS, TEL AVIV, 1909.

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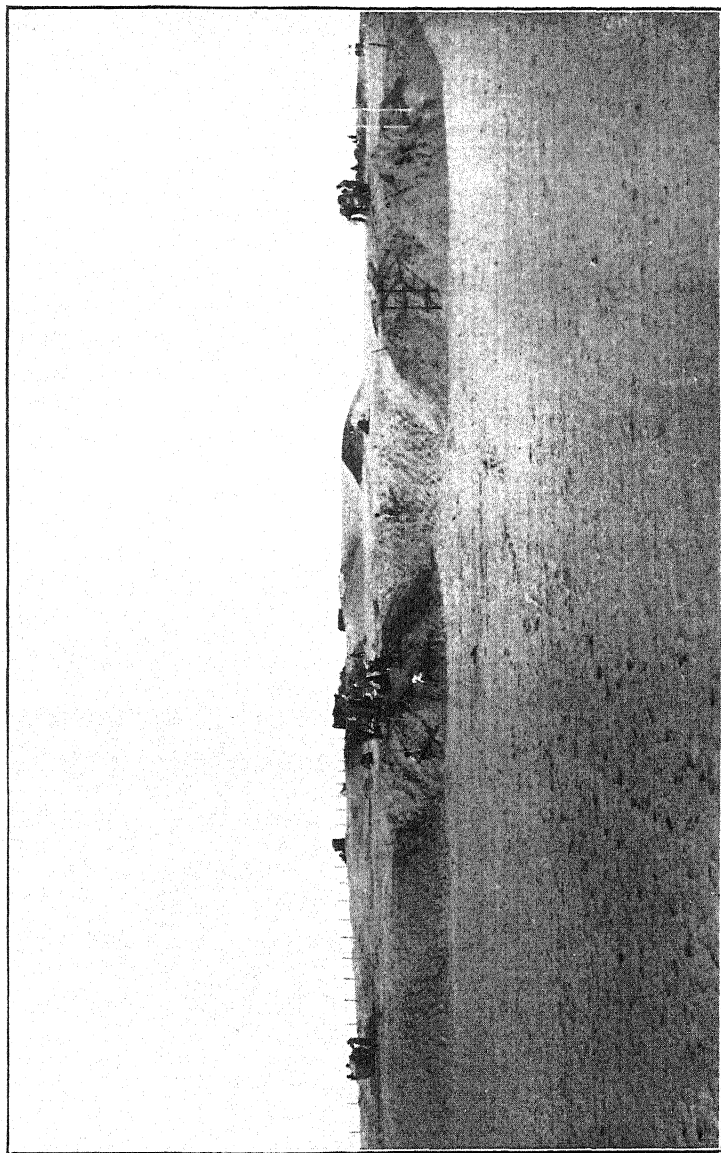


cups of tea and coffee of poor quality, lunch in the big open black tent of camels' hair was set before us on a huge bright-coloured Damascus rug. Desert air is keen, and though our hosts exclaimed at our bird-like appetites, I, at least, made a creditable hole in the great dishes of rice and mutton and highly spiced "innards" which, hot and steaming, were brought in quick rotation. Rice is a difficult thing to eat with one's fingers; it has a diabolical knack of eluding one and finding a resting place in one's lap instead of one's mouth; but the huge thin soft flakes of moist unleavened bread, at least eighteen inches across, that they make in this part of the world, serve equally well as a table napkin, a comestible, or a spoon. Round the wide entrance of the tent a score of nomads, with keen dark eyes, crouched on their haunches, watching us eat; old grey-bearded men finely dressed, handsome young warriors, prideful and poised as great birds of prey, ragged impudent youths and small children with shaven crowns. Everyone was courteous and gravely attentive, and throughout the long hot lazy afternoon kept us supplied with sticky sweetmeats, cigarettes and innumerable cups of coffee.

Somnolent, overfed, filled with lazy content, we lay and smoked, and talked in desultory snatches, and watched the great ball of the sun sink lower on the horizon, while in front of us squatted the minstrel of the tribe, a wizened, leathery, poorly dressed man with dreamy eyes, who thrummed absent-mindedly, on a kind of small mandoline, monotonous but oddly arresting melodies, and sang in a whining undertone improvised verses about each of the visitors. Of what he said about us, I understood but little, for I do not know the Arabic of those parts, but when he hit off a telling line, there was a deep-throated chuckle of appreciation from the attentive audience outside.

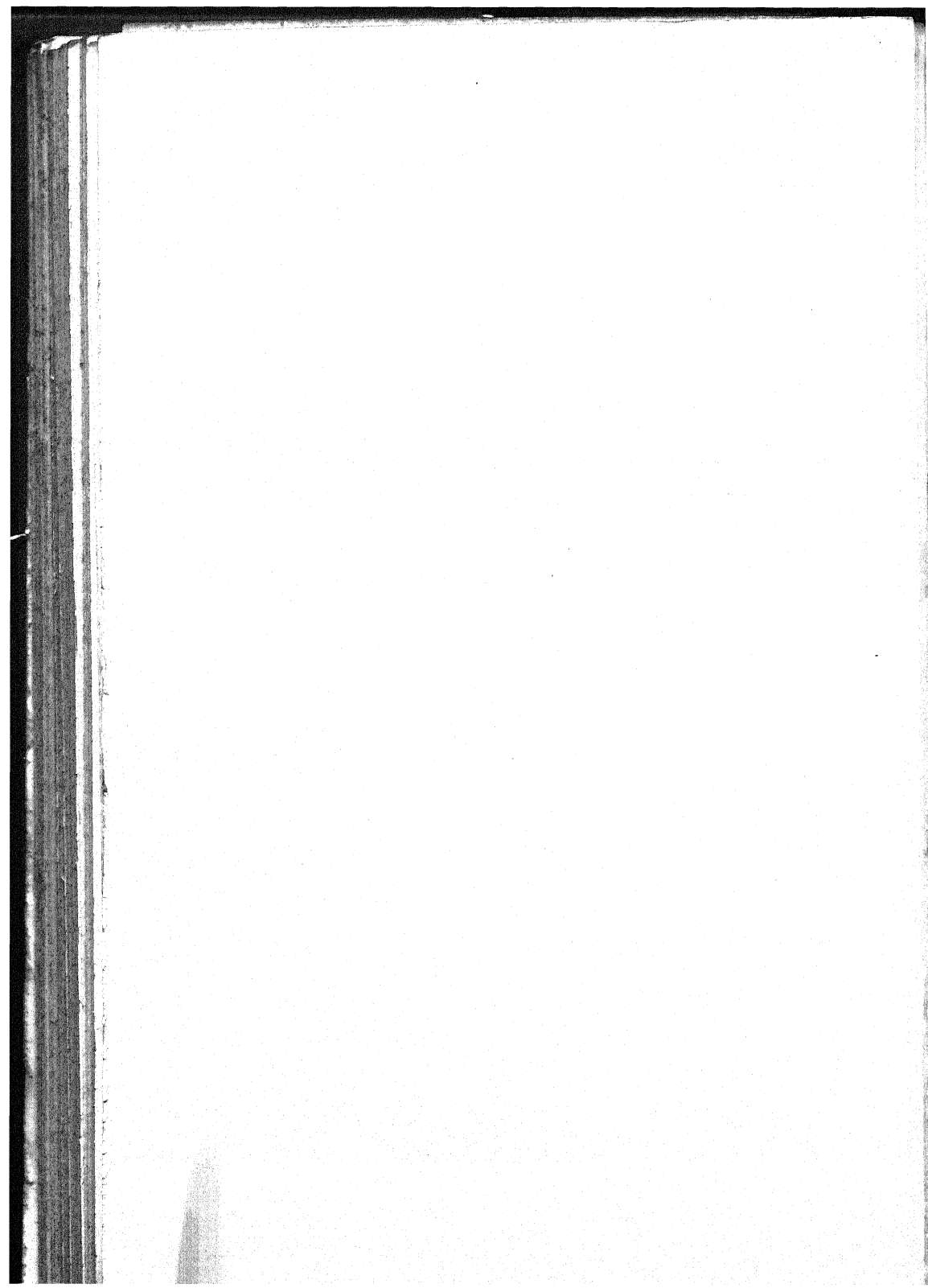
For the time being one felt many thousand miles from the crowded life of the north, from wars and

rumours of wars, from the dissensions of white and brown, and *café au lait*, from the burning religious hatreds, from the feverish round of sights and Baedekers and Kodaks, in short from Cabbages and Kings. Before us stretched an infinity of yellowish grey desert, that ran far south to Suez, and beyond, the desert that lay under a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, as the Israelites pursued their weary, patient quest, desert that is slowly engulfing the ruins of Turkish fortifications, bulwarks of Turkish hopes and dreams of a conquered Egypt. One seemed to have leapt the centuries backwards, to the days of our wild ragged forefathers, before there were continents and countries mapped and tabulated, before utility reached out predatory hands, besmirching the beauty of life. They are rather wonderful, such moments, when the great world recedes, leaving one alone with the sun and the sand and the sky, and the children of these three.



SITE OF ALLENBY ROAD, 1918.

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CHAPTER IV

TEL AVIV

A QUEER little town and at the moment unique is Tel Aviv, the "New Jerusalem," "The only Jewish City in the World." It is at once a paradox and a parable. It represents in bricks and mortar the Jewish ideal, the ideal of a permanent home, built, financed, run and inhabited only by Jews. As yet unknown even by name to the majority of English people, it is one of the most oddly interesting and significant places in the Near East.

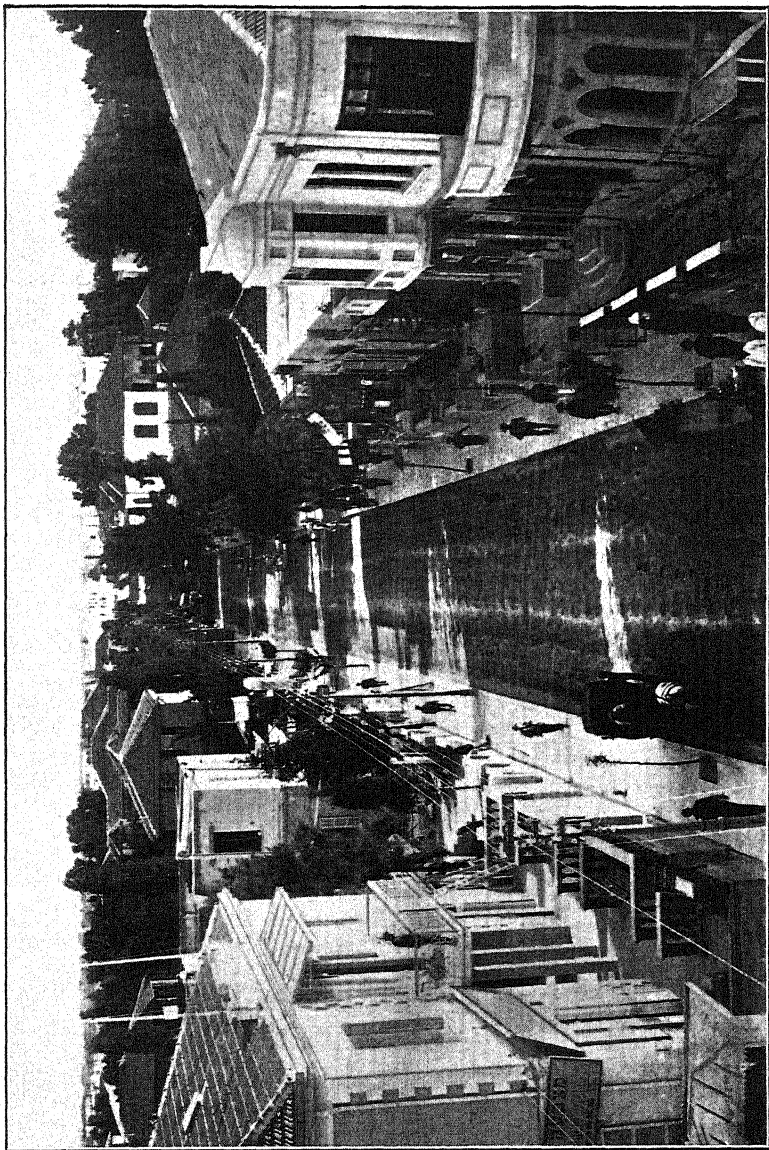
For the Jews have long since realized that Jerusalem is lost to them, that its entity as a Christian shrine is for ever established, that, did the Holy Sepulchre not exist, the Mosque of Omar would stand supreme and that the Arabs would dispute their very right to breathe; and that even if Christians and Moslems did not divide Jerusalem between them, the spirit of unity and progress is not in the old Jew of the Khalouka regime, who from the national point of view is covered with mildew, the spirit of his forefathers broken by poverty and the devastating rôle of under-dog. "To Jerusalem next year," the age-old cry of the exiled sons of Israel, is as dead as the dodo.

But quite different are the Jews of the new regime, who have added on to their natural vigour the knowledge and practical experience of the countries wherein they have spent their long exile. They intended to make themselves a country, or rather to re-make an old one; every country must have a capital, a pivot, so they set themselves to build one.

Situated but a bare mile north of Jaffa on a sandy foreshore, the first practical conception of Tel Aviv

came from a number of families then resident in Jaffa, who grouped themselves under the leadership of Mr. Meir Dizengoff, now Mayor of Tel Aviv, with the title of Achuzat Bait. Money was forthcoming from the Jewish national fund to the tune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and the first house was built—a house built on sand, it is true, but a house with solid spiritual foundations—in 1909. Sixty houses were built that year, including the Herzliah or Gymnasium, that is still one of the show buildings of the place. Then the War came and money ran short, and the lifeblood of Tel Aviv ebbed very low indeed. Five years ago, indeed, Tel Aviv virtually did not exist. In the years immediately succeeding the War nearly a thousand houses were built, and the population jumped from 550 souls to nearly 17,000 at the end of 1923, and is now very much greater. Now there are over 1,500 houses, covering an area of about 450 acres, and on every little vacant plot a house is planned or in process of erection.

Under the Turkish regime Tel Aviv enjoyed but little real independence, but under our administration and under the direction of the late High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, she was given a recognized legal status, a special constitution of township with a right to her own internal administration, her own municipal bench with limited powers, and her own municipal police force, the first Jewish municipal police force in the world. Certainly the makers of Tel Aviv have had to fight nature every inch of the way, for the town stands on loose sand, almost Sahara in its density. The cement that forms its houses is made from the sand that is besides induced to grow budding avenues of shady pepper and eucalyptus trees. She has been nicknamed by her neighbours Los Angeles the Second, and certainly her birth and growth have had much of the startling suddenness of a film city.



ALLENBY ROAD TO-DAY, TEL AVIV.

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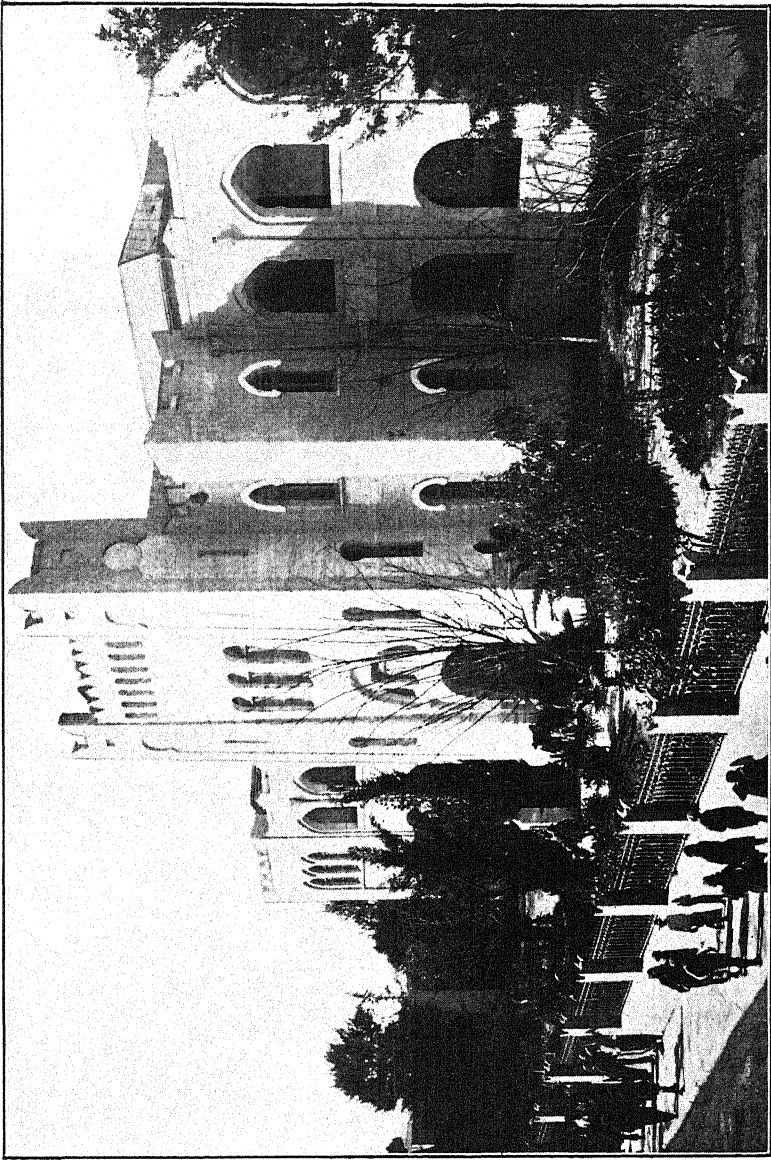
There are no European hotels at Tel Aviv, but I had been at Jaffa only a few hours when I was overwhelmed with invitations of the most hospitable kind from various of her notabilities, for Tel Aviv welcomes writers and is anxious that her brief and vigorous history should be given to a doubting world.

My first introduction to Tel Aviv society—this time exclusively masculine—was at a luncheon party given by Mr. Meir Dizengoff, the Mayor, at the Casino. There were about twelve guests, comprising most of the leading business men of the town. One or two of them talked English, and a few of them, including my host, French, so conversation flowed easily enough, and without formality. My fellow guests sprang from a variety of social strata, and in a race where a man's insignia of rank is the fruits of his work, were all well-to-do, and as we call it, self-made. Not a handsome race, the Jews, I reflected while I glanced round the circle of shrewd dark Hebraic faces, set on short spare animated figures, but clever, Heavens, how clever! I know not in what similar gathering of another race, largely uncultivated and of no set education, brought together haphazard, one would meet such a solid phalanx of sheer brains, brains not only of the business kind, though these were business men, but the fluid keen brains with which only nature or heredity can endow a man. No matter what the topic, whether trade or politics, or art, or purely feminine matters even, every man with whom one talked seemed to have a quick comprehensive sympathetic grasp of it, and the power of quick thinking and quick retort, in which we Britishers are so sadly lacking, to the detriment of conversation as a pastime, and of which one finds more than a trace in the Americans. A Jew, if he entertains, entertains well, and our meal, solid and liquid, if over long, was as good as anyone could eat one's way through in Europe, and though I had been but an afterthought in this large luncheon party of men,

I found a big bouquet of flowers tied up with ribbon laid in my place to the right of the host. Certainly I like talking with Jews. They stimulate one's imagination and one's mind to their best efforts, making one pull well up to the collar instead of tailing absent-mindedly along as one is so easily apt to do among slower-thinking Westerners.

After lunch I was taken all round Tel Aviv by car on a tour of inspection, to the Herzliah, the big Synagogue, the Municipal Library, "Shaar Zion," the Meteorological Station, the Magistrates' Court, and various other public buildings. The Casino I had already lunched in, a queer ornate little place standing on stilts like a stork on the very edge of the sea, lapped at high tide by tiny waves. I was later to know the Casino well, for several evenings I danced there on a floor that left something to be desired, to the music of one of the best small string-bands I have ever heard. But Tel Aviv does not dissipate much. It works too hard and goes to bed early. The Casino, incidentally the only Casino in Palestine, is part of their scheme for making Tel Aviv into a health and pleasure resort, as well as a commercial centre, and a pleasure park is being planned, and a bathing establishment. The air of this part of the country is said to be especially beneficial to rheumatic and gastro-nomic troubles and Tel Aviv already owns several hospitals and clinics ; but it all seems a little like putting the cart before the horse, for a medical officer has since told me that the question of drainage has been largely overlooked, and that unless this defect is remedied before the town grows much larger, it is in danger of being devastated by disease.

I was taken also, till my legs began to ache, over a number of commercial houses, silk, tanning, chocolate, stockings, and furniture factories, etc. For most of the trades are already represented in Tel Aviv, and although some of them had only finished building a few weeks previously, sometimes



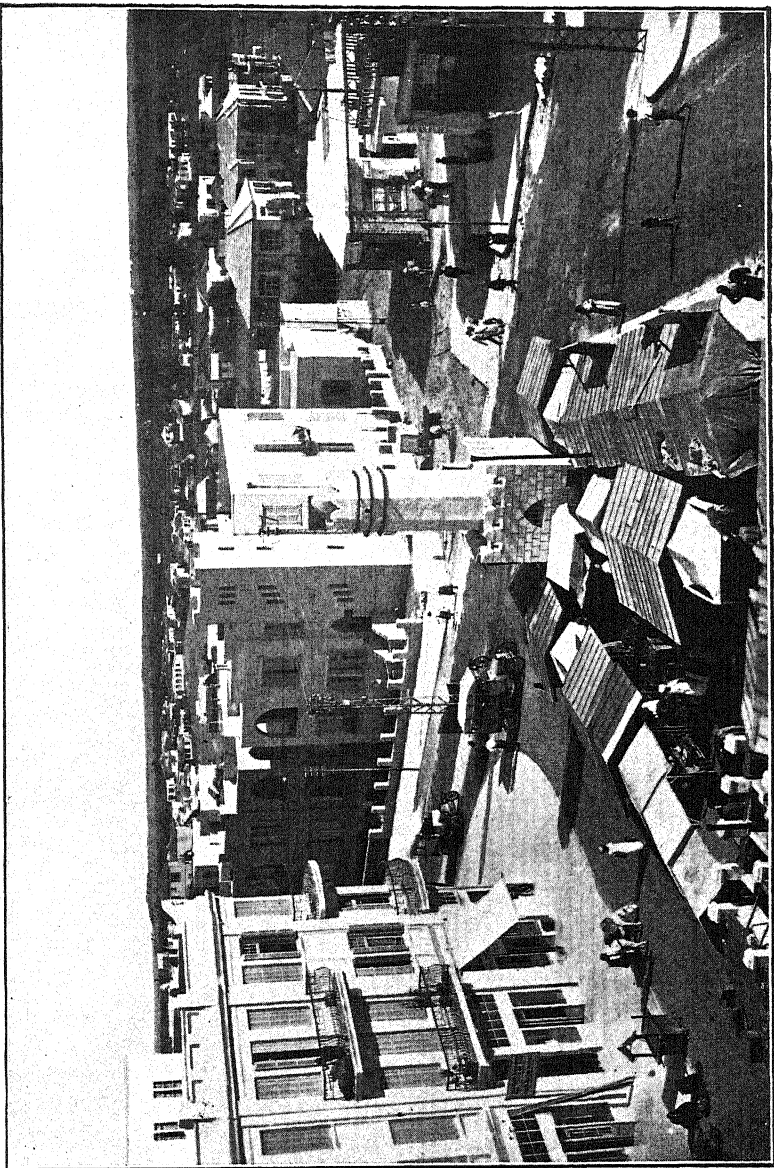
THE HERTZLIAH, TEL AVIV.

only a few days, they were turning out several hundred pound's worth of stuff every week. Many of the principal business men had had their business training in the United States, whose national quality of hustle they had assimilated, and I was really amazed by the rapidity with which they had got things going, in spite of the adverse circumstances many of them worked under. Tel Aviv owns its three newspapers, the *Haaretz*, the *Hapoel-Hatzair*, and the *Kuntress*. At night one is struck with the brilliant illumination of the streets. Every house and shop seems ablaze with electric light, in marked contrast to the other towns of Palestine, that as a rule are infinitely dim and sepulchral after nightfall. I was privileged also to see a little of the personal life of Tel Aviv, in the private houses and among the wives and daughters of these budding Empire makers. I have said that the Jew is not handsome as a rule ; all the family beauty seems concentrated on his womenfolk. I saw some of the prettiest women I have ever seen in Tel Aviv, Oriental flowers of beauty some of them, when young, slim, lustrous eyed and graceful, well dressed—for many of the more well-to-do get their frocks from Paris—and well educated, speaking half a dozen languages. Of course like all exotics they fade earlier than do the women of the north, and by thirty a young Jewess is past her prime.

It was a curious experience later and alone to wander through the streets of Tel Aviv. Every town has its atmosphere, its personality, as distinct and characteristic as that of human beings. The personality of Tel Aviv is quite different to that of any other town I have ever known. It is not merely its architecture, which is, begging its pardon, frankly hideous, a reminiscent mixture of Margate and Port Said, with a dash of Hollywood thrown in, made all of white cement, with queer geometrical excrescences, ornate and yet undecorative. The streets all seem in process of rapid formation; a mass of confused masonry,

among which yesterday you picked your way tentatively, is an ordinary neat thoroughfare to-day. No five hundred yards of anything seems to be in the same condition or degree of finish as the last. The effect is almost uncanny ; one feels that freakish djins wreak their will with Tel Aviv at night, as if a building might suddenly disappear by invisible means while one is looking. For a while I wondered where it was that I had felt anything like this impression, and suddenly I remembered my one and only experience of film work, while I stood waiting my turn in a big studio outside London, and watched the garden "set" being changed to that of a race-course, and the race-course in its turn giving place to a ducal ball-room. Another remote resemblance to it that I have seen in real life, was in a little " Boom town " in the far western states of America that sheltered some of my earliest childhood's years, that seemed to have changed its aspect every morning when one looked out of the window. I do not think I exaggerate, for a frequent visitor to Tel Aviv told me that each time he went there he had to ask his way of the passers-by, so many new streets and buildings had sprung up in his absence. A current joke runs that once when it was proposed to draw out an official plan of the town one of the Committee exclaimed : " What's the use ? Before the ink is dry a dozen new houses will have been built."

But, as I have said, it is not its architecture that makes the atmosphere of Tel Aviv different from that of other towns. The difference I think must be caused by the vast diversity of human blood that goes to the making of its people. It is neither of the East nor of the West. One can ask for any commodity in any of the numerous shops in English, French, German, Arabic, in Scandinavian, Yiddish, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and probably Czecho-Slovak and Yugo-Slav if one knew them, and be tolerably certain of being understood by someone. Every brand of



A GENERAL VIEW OF TEL AVIV TO-DAY.

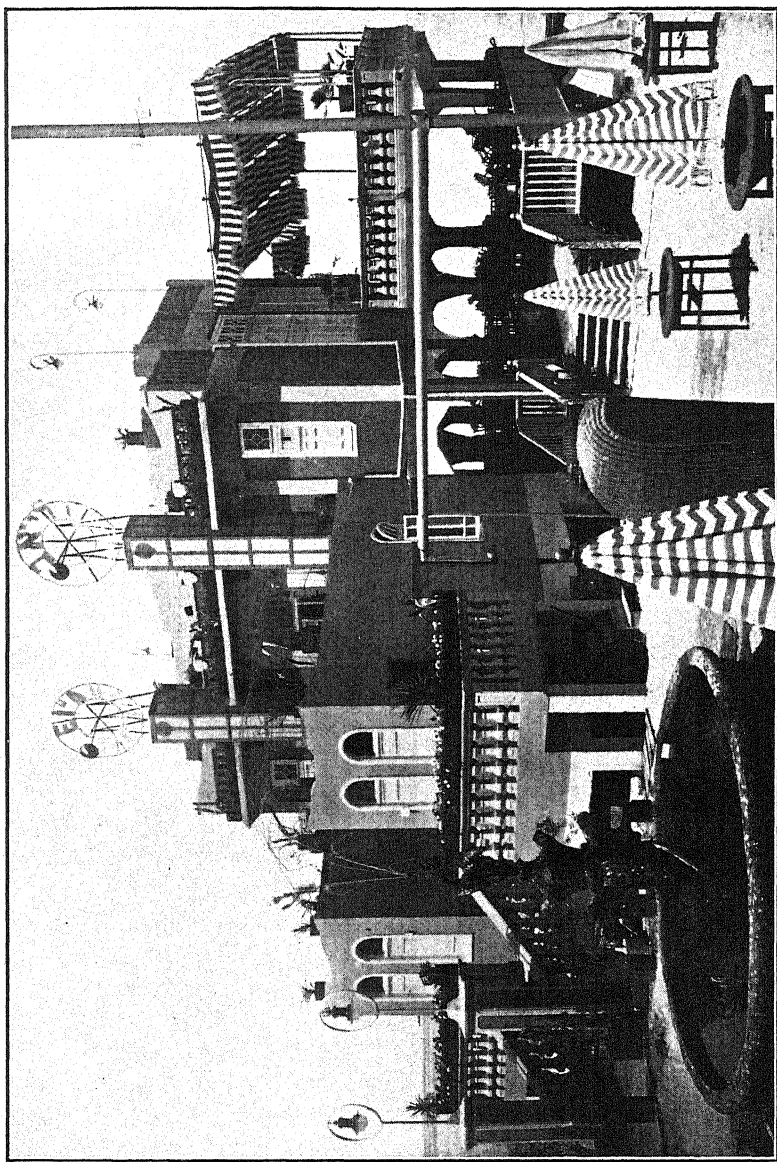
physiognomy can be seen during a ten minutes' walk, and every fashion of clothing, but yet no one of them could be mistaken for anything but Jewish, though his or her skin be as white as that of an Albino, or his nose as flat as a Red Indian's. If the eighth part of a man's blood be Hebraic, of the Orient, though he and his forebears may have lived for generations in Europe or the Americas, that eighth is stronger than all the rest put together. Like a dog who comes dripping from the water, he lands in the home of his forefathers, shakes himself clear of his acquired nationality, and, hey presto ! is a Jew once more. I know of no other race whose nationality is so persistent, save perhaps the Chinese. Once a Jew or a Chinaman, always a Jew or a Chinaman. I have also had something of the same impression in the same little Western American town of which I have spoken, where men of all creeds and nationalities have come in their search for money and freedom, who all, in an amazingly short space of time, blend and fuse into sheer American. In Tel Aviv I received the significant impression of a transfiguration, a sort of fusing and blending of human brains and blood going on among the people round me, a return to type. My impression is hard to describe. It was as if one watched a person heavily made up for the stage in a character widely differing from his own, who removes his paint and travesty, gradually resuming before one's eyes his real character. It was the rebirth of the Jewish soul of which I caught a glimpse, the renaissance of the soul of a nation. It was a curious sensation.

By every boat arrive thousands of Jewish emigrants, speaking a babel of tongues, superimposed upon their natural Yiddish, a sufficiently guttural and hideous lingua franca, made up mostly of low German, and supplemented by scraps from a score of other tongues, spoken in every Ghetto of the world. Work is found for them according to their capacities, in

the factories and workshops of Tel Aviv, or in the numerous "Colonies" that lie strewn throughout the length and breadth of Palestine. No one is allowed to go under. Sometimes the father or son of a family comes first, cautiously to spy out the possibilities of the land, settling himself down to make a living and a home before sending for his family. Sometimes a whole family will arrive, of patriarchal dimensions, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, children; sisters and brothers, and an aunt and uncle or two; pathetic little family groups who between them have screwed up courage to make the great venture, who have resolved to give their own kind a trial, have sold out the various businesses on which their livelihood depended, have begged or borrowed the money for their passage, and set forth for the unknown, bewildered, hanging together for support and encouragement, poverty stricken and desolate.

Many such families have I seen disembarking at the port of Jaffa, wearing the garments and the manners of strange countries, pathetic and yet in some ways heroic, abject, but yet under all their desolation with the patient obstinacy and determination of their kind to make good. These disembarkations made me think of the Bible reading of my youth, setting before me a picture of the first arrival of the pilgrims of Israel in the Promised Land, travel-worn and weary with their long sojourn in the Wilderness, but confident and proud, conquerors led by a seer. History repeats itself but under a different guise. Not proudly or in conquering masses do the Children of Israel return to their Promised Land, but meanly, blindly, one by one. A just retribution, if you will, for the world's greatest sin.

Sometimes the symbolism of the great return is lost in the sheer simplicity of human drama. Sometimes laughter, wild laughter, and the uncontrolled tears of the Oriental rise above the general babel when an emigrant ship comes in. Parents or children sob



THE CASINO, TEL AVIV.

with hysterical joy as they clasp in their arms the dear ones from whom they have been separated a weary while, a man swears or a woman faints to hear of the death or misfortune of a friend or relation, a hat goes into the air with a shout of joy as a beloved and unexpected face is seen.

"So you have come at last, brother! I did not think you had the courage. Where did you get the money? Good, there is work for all. Aie, Aie."

Once I thought a stout Russian Jewess who had travelled down in my compartment from Ludd, would go mad with joy on the Tel Aviv platform as she gathered in her arms her small daughter, a tiny sickly child, evidently in the last stages of consumption.

"Hourasha, hourasha, good, good," she exclaimed over and over again, as she hugged the poor wee mite, till overcome by emotion she fell down in a dead faint, to be restored with noisy sympathy by her friends. Once I felt an ache at my heart as I heard a party of emigrants break it to a pretty young girl that the fiancé she had come to meet had died of influenza in Athens. I have never seen anything so heart-rending as the face of that poor girl as, without a word, she turned and walked away through the shrieking joyous crowd.

Baron Edmond de Rothschild is the patron saint of Tel Aviv, and portraits of him, handsome, powerful, and dignified, hang in all the public offices, for it was his generous grants of money that largely fostered its early growth. Every Jew in Tel Aviv, indeed in Palestine, will tell you tales of his business acumen, his generosity and benevolence. No detail of a new scheme was too small for his notice, no one too unimportant to gain his private ear, and no one moreover, was more able to deal with a malefactor or a malingerer. For it was no part of his ideal of a new Jerusalem to encourage pauperism or indiscriminate charity. His ideal was that of a self-respecting co-operative community, in which everyone should

pull his weight, and in which Tel Aviv, after it had been set on its feet, so to speak, should be self-supporting, producing its own food and clothing, machinery and other necessities of life, and prove to a doubting world that the Jewish people still possess unity and purpose, that it can justify its demands for a country of its own.

My visit to Tel Aviv coincided with the famous visit of Lord Balfour, that at the time and since has provoked so much criticism, about the *for*s and *against*s of which it is no business of mine to air my views, if any. Even before his longed-for arrival at Tel Aviv, and still more afterwards, he bade fair to run Baron de Rothschild a close second. Portraits of him also hung on the walls of offices and public buildings, opposite to that of the Baron, and most of the streets and squares and roads that were being hurriedly erected, and rolled, and watered, and planted, were being named after him. In fact I am not sure that a few were not being made for the express purpose of having some more to baptize by his name.

Providence alone knows what will be the ultimate fate of Tel Aviv. There are those, and not Jews only, who acclaim her as a new city on the world's map. There are others, the majority, who believe her birth and growth to be but a flash in the pan, a dream child born of visions and injudicious grants of money. Not the profoundest sage can tell, or whether it is for the ultimate good of humanity in general, that she lives or dies. The next ten years will show. But Tel Aviv, boom town built on an arid foreshore, will, unless I am much mistaken, figure in the greater world before very long. Prejudice apart, she is a striking monument of a race that has survived and suffered much.

CHAPTER V

ZIONISM AND THE BALFOUR VISIT

"THE greatest day that Jerusalem has known since Solomon laid the foundation stone of the Temple!" These words, uttered in my hearing by a highly educated and cosmopolitan Jew that famous first of April on which Lord Balfour opened the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, give a fair idea of the fervour with which the sons of Israel regarded the first overt act of sympathy and encouragement they had received from a Christian of consequence since, with the murder of the Messiah, they sounded their national death-knell nearly two thousand years ago.

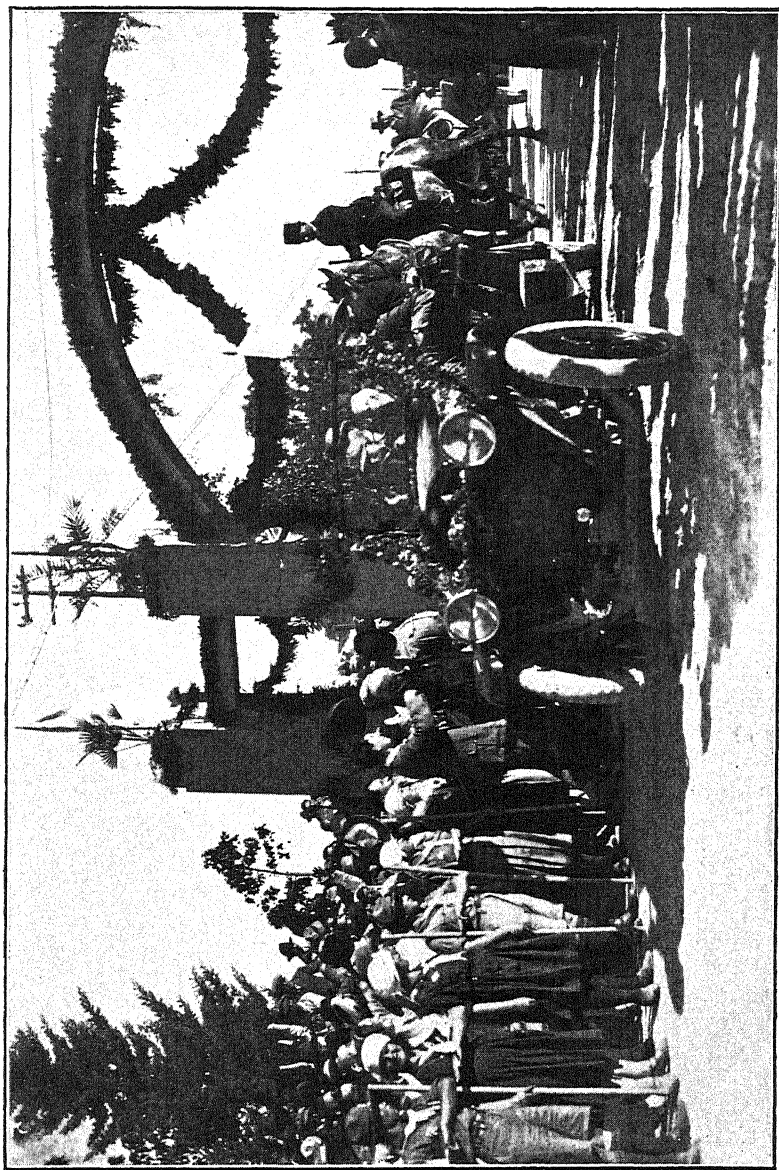
"I would that I had fifty thousand Jews at my disposal so that their live bodies could be laid from the Jaffa to the Damascus Gates for him to walk over!" So spoke another influential Jew. In this state of exaltation did the Palestinians live for a month before Lord Balfour arrived. Breathless expectation, the pent-up longing of centuries, the fruition of a national hope, the very air one breathed, was charged and impregnated with all these. Whatever one's personal opinions or sympathies, however ignorant or neutral one might be as to the rights or wrongs, or causes and consequences of the Zionist movement, it was impossible not to be touched by this heart-cry of a repatriated exiled race, not to be ever so slightly exalted by the fluid atmosphere of excitement that wrapped one round as in a garment.

Probably I was the only Christian in Palestine able fully to chew the cud of the strange, almost theatrical romance of the Balfour visit, for I alone was blissfully free from responsibility! For weeks the

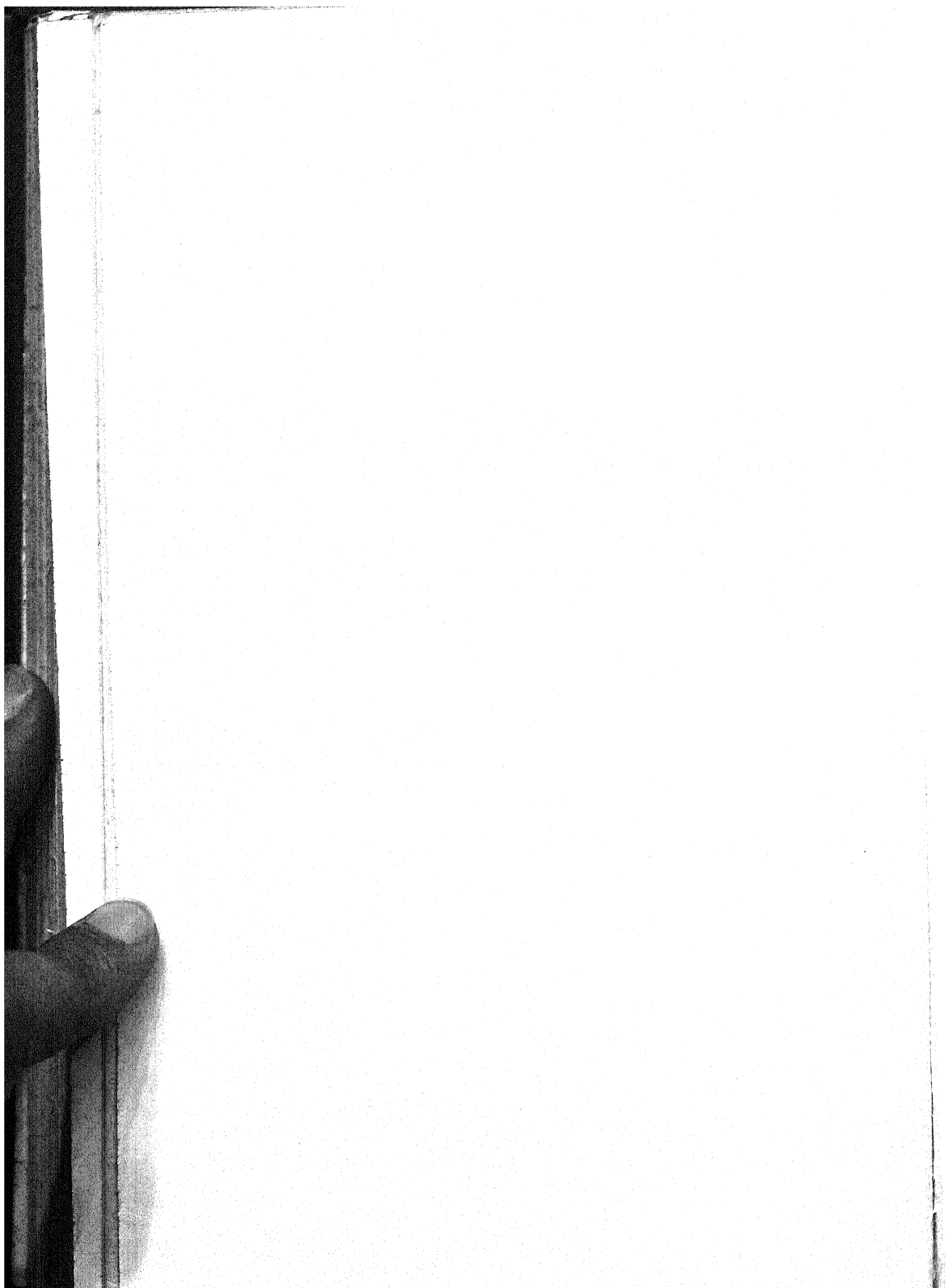
heads of departments, at any rate those in any way responsible for his lordship's bodily safety, slept less soundly in their beds. For days some of them went lunchless, asking frenzied questions, roaring frenzied and blasphemous orders down the telephone between bites at a sandwich.

Would or would there not be active and open rebellion among the Arabs? It was known that the leading and more influential among the latter were against any violent display of the anger and indignation that consumed them; that they meant to content themselves with the shutting of shops, black borders to their newspapers and general signs of public mourning. But what would happen in the little streets, the rattle-taggle labyrinths of intrigue that make up an eastern town? One indiscreet Jew in a boastful frame of mind, one Arab half-seas over, with a knife: such steel and flint might light a conflagration that in a flash would blot out the results of five years' uphill, patient colonization and administration. So said the pessimists; the optimists declared that the preparations of the Army, and Air Force, and Police, and Gendarmerie of Palestine were too complete, that not a contingency was unprepared for, or a loophole unwatched. In any case the betting was as high and heavy as on Derby Day!

Next to Jerusalem the Jaffa-Tel Aviv visit was the one from which most danger was apprehended, for Jaffa is as anti-Jew as Tel Aviv is anti-Arab, and their boundaries overlap! When I arrived at Jaffa, a few hours before the momentous visit was due, I found a city of the dead. Not a shop was open, nor a cab plying, and I had all the difficulty in the world in finding a porter to carry my suit-case from the station to the hotel. A contingent of Palestine Gendarmerie—picturesque creatures in high kalpuks and red cummerbunds, that a lady was rude enough to say looked like cholera belts worn in the wrong place—paraded the streets and made a line between



ARCH OF WELCOME TO LORD BALFOUR ; TEL AVIV.



Jaffa and Tel Aviv that no Jew or Arab was allowed to bisect. In and out of the hotel dashed heated officers and N.C.O.'s; up on the roof dipped and waved a black flag and a white flag, while behind them the C.O. stood and blasphemed. His lordship must be at least half-way through lunch over at Richon-le-Sion, no one knew when he would be ready to start, and the helio at the other end did not answer! And no one knew what had become of the armoured cars! At last telegrams began to come in. His lordship had finished the hors d'œuvres—the entrée—was sampling the Richon port—was smoking a cigar—was taking a stroll in the garden—was preparing to get into the motor! Our excitement leapt to fever heat. The officers and the N.C.O.'s gave all the appearance of men sickening for hydrophobia, and I sped off in a cab, procured with infinite pains, for Tel Aviv.

In spite of an official permit on most expensive paper, I had to discard the cab at the end of a few hundred yards, so great was the crowd. I wanted to get my impression cheek-by-jowl with the Jew in the street, to absorb his emotions, see with his eyes, hear with his ears, stepped on by his toes, instead of getting it all second-hand from the more commodious seats of the mighty where I had been offered a small niche. From every house hung a forest of flags and bunting and greenery. I had been told that there were sixty thousand Jews in Palestine; there seemed to be more than sixty thousand in Allenby Road alone, most of them standing on my toes! The Yiddish tongue with its queer babel of half-familiar words in every language one had ever heard, made a deafening guttural crescendo of sound, and mispronounced the name of Balfour in half a hundred different accents. At the near end of Allenby Road stood the arch of greeting. The heat of the day, the dense white dust and the odour of perspiring humanity were overwhelming, and I was glad for more than photographic

reasons when a kindly Hebrew gave me and my camera a leg-up on to a high post.

Some kind of instinctive "wireless" informed the crowd that the great moment was approaching . . . for fully a minute there was dead silence, and then a low murmur that rose to a roar, a roar that increased in volume till it seemed like a solid wall of sound. Far away behind us a row of cars could be seen slowly approaching. "Balfour! Balfour! Balfour!" The cry was almost a howl. Below me a woman tore her hair loose while the tears rained down her face and dripped on to her gown. The faces of men with staring eyeballs were the faces of men transfigured. . . . I have attended a good many emotional public functions in Peace and in War, among men of all kinds, creeds and colours, but never, as on that afternoon, oblivious to the discomfort and precariousness of my slippery perch, have I seen, heard and actually felt such a fierce fervour, such a concentrated force of mass joy and enthusiasm.

The line of cars drew nearer.

"Balfour . . . !" I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that I think so must our ancestors have acclaimed their Christ. The car passed slowly by us, and for a moment the babel died whilst all the faculties of the crowd seemed concentrated in their eyes. He bowed right and left, smiling like a pleased child. In that crowd of dark fanatic Orientals with their narrow olive faces, shrewd eyes and under-developed bodies he stood out with remarkable effect; his pleasant English girth, rosy complexion, high open brow of a sage and his simple almost cherubic smile that seemed to ignore the intrigues, the complexities, the mingling of hate and mad joy, the political significance that underlay his presence in that dusty half-built street. He looked like a very charming English gentleman who receives the acclamations of his tenantry at the local flower show. . . .

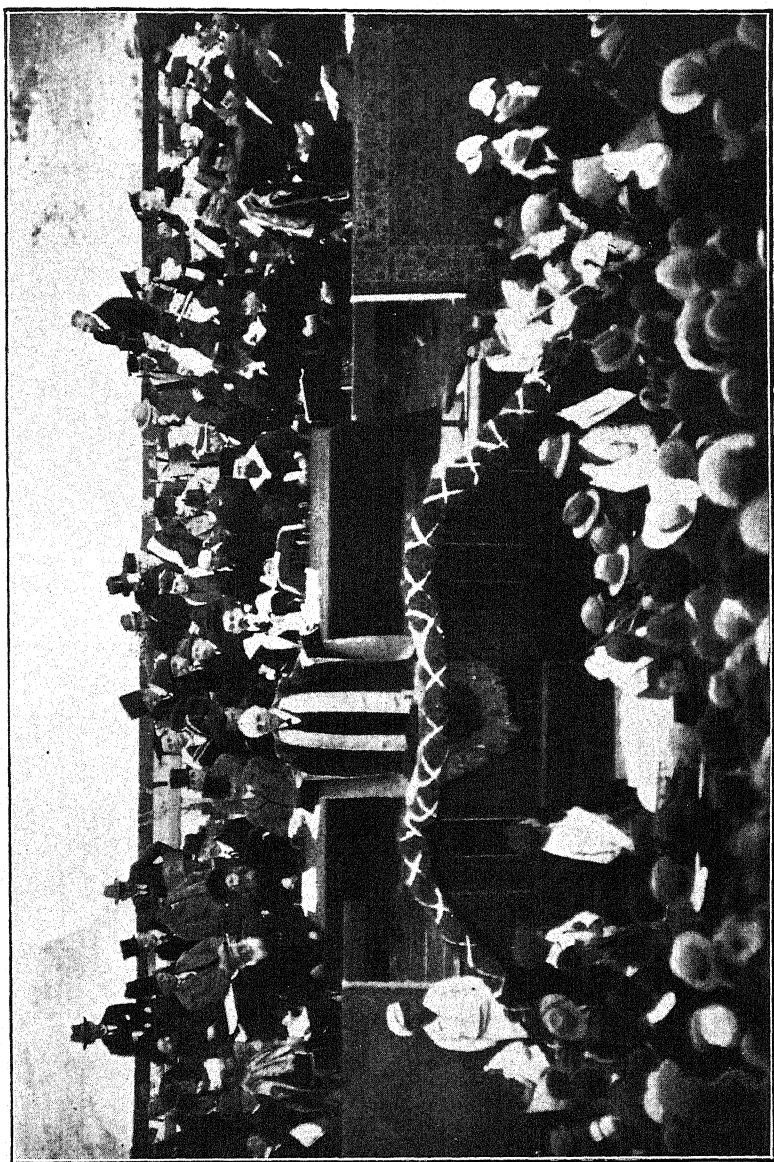
Following the line of least resistance I let myself

be swept along by the crowd that streamed down the Allenby Road when the great man, having been presented with the freedom of the city of Tel Aviv, had driven slowly away. Another million or so people trampled and jostled and hung like huge bunches of grapes from every available projection opposite the spot where a reception was being held, and that the Maccabee guard of students kept in comparative order by prodigious feasts of mingled firmness and good nature. An hour later I joined another million or so who waited for him to leave the Gymnasium.

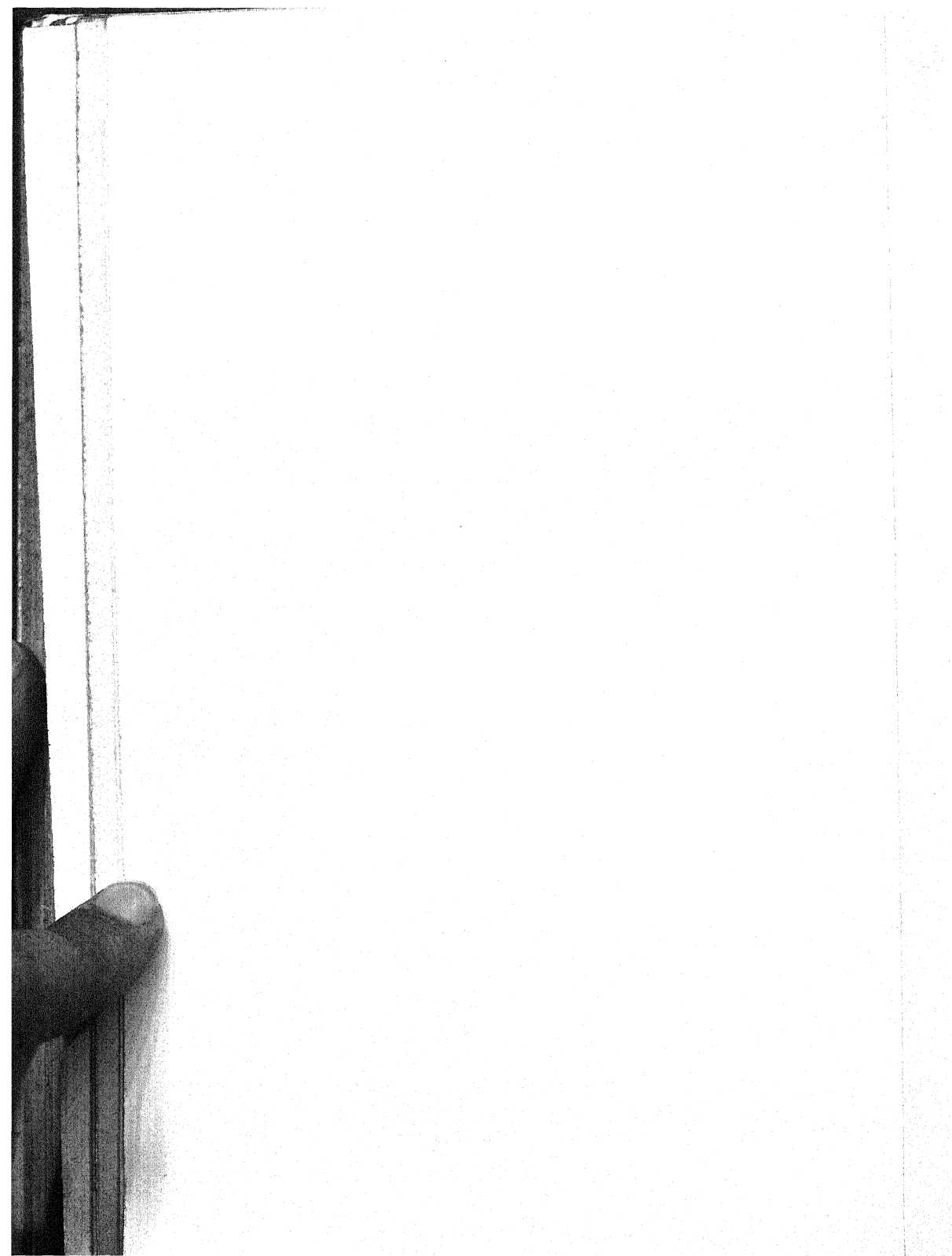
The psychology of a crowd when its guard of everyday reserve is lowered is always instructive and interesting to study. Never have I seen a crowd that so revealed itself and its soul as that Jewish crowd on that great day of hope realized. They showed themselves for what they are—a queer mingling of East and West. There were all sorts of them, bearing the stamp of all the different countries they and their fathers had found temporary asylum in. They were of all colours and types of physiognomy, fair and dark, aquiline and chubby, saturnine and expansive, many of them wore the clothes of the countries they had but recently left; one noticed the gold teeth-fillings and square-shouldered suits of America, the short cloth-topped shoes of France, the corduroys of Southern Europe, the loose robes of Asia, the black high-waisted coats and sombreros of Spain, but all these sat on them extraneously as on a man who wears a borrowed overcoat. Nothing could extinguish their vivid individuality, the individuality of the Jew which is not quite like any other individuality in the world. On their ugly almost painfully intelligent faces, in their eyes usually so shrewd and alert mingled the two elements that have made their race unique of its kind, the visionary idealism, the stoicism of the East, and the practical acumen of the West. The Jew alone of all people in the world, combines in his nature the artistic and the commercial, the love of

beauty and of the practical results of beauty. He is at the same time idealist and realist, and it is this mingling of qualities that, to speak in the vernacular, has enabled him to keep his end up in a world that for two thousand years has hated and persecuted him and that, with all the odds against him, has made him the world's supreme middleman. To-day the idealist was uppermost: thousands of dark faces shone as if from some fire burning within. In spite of any hereditary prejudices one might possess, in spite of political or practical doubts one might harbour in the cold light of reason, it was impossible for the moment not to feel the triumphant enchantment of the hour.

So much for the solidity of Tel Aviv architecture! Outside the Gymnasium I and my camera took up a strategic position high above the crowd on a bit of stone, or rather silicate coping that looked as if it would have supported the weight of an army. Somebody unnoticed by me must have leant on it from behind, for suddenly I found myself precipitated some eight feet on to the heads of the crowd beneath, in a shower of broken masonry. Gone was my chance of seeing anything, or of taking photographs of my great compatriot. My chief occupation lay in trying to breathe in enough of the thick fetid air to sustain life until such time as the crowd should thin out! At last, when I was beginning to wonder if it wouldn't be less trouble to die quietly of asphyxiation, a deafening roar rent the air. The crowd round me surged and swayed, and tried to get a better view by standing on my feet. I heard the grinding and buzzing of cars and caught a glimpse of hot shouting red faces surmounted by the kalpuks of the Palestine Police, and the roar rose to a volume that nearly broke my ear-drums. The cars passed out of sight and the crowd bethought itself of changing its point of vantage. But the two parts of it both moved in the same direction to the corner where I was wedged, a defence-



"I DECLARE THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OPEN" (LORD BALFOUR, April 1st, 1925).
Facing page 130



less battering ram. I cannot say that consideration was the distinguishing mark of that crowd and I can look back on the next ten minutes as the supreme fight of my life. Twice I tripped and nearly went down. Heedless of the battering of fists and elbows on every inch of my person, gasping for breath, the perspiration pouring down my face, I fought with feet and hands and elbows. My camera, which it had hitherto been my chief preoccupation to protect, I was obliged to use as a battering ram. At last I got round the corner and was swept breathlessly but in safety by the crowd to the less congested street where eventually, by the grace of Allah, I picked up a cab in which to make a dirty and dishevelled return to the Jaffa hotel. There I found everyone in a state of acute indignation against a copy of *la Palestine*, the leading Arab newspaper of the district, that had brought out an English edition in which it demonstrated its hatred of what it called, in its enormous headline, "The Death Knell of all Arab Hopes."

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places!" It had even called upon the Epistle to the Ephesians to adorn its tale in which it accused Lord Balfour of adding to "the misery of the world" and prophesied for us a fall more cataclysmic than that of the Roman Empire. It reinforced its arguments with quotations from H. G. Wells and Georges Batault, it called us every name under the sun for our tacit support of Zionism, and its vitriolic leading article was signed by a prominent Englishwoman living on Mount Carmel.

That night in the Tel Aviv Cinema, temporarily transformed into an Opera House, the enthusiasm, though more restrained, was equally intense. The last act of "Samson and Delilah," well put on and really beautifully sung by the Palestine Opera Company, was practically ignored by the crowd who sat

with eyes and ears strained to where Lord Balfour sat, fresh and untired by his long day's hard work, blandly smiling among a group of Hebrew notabilities, not missing a flicker of his eyelash, reverently attentive to a chance cough or movement. I'll wager that dressmakers as far afield as Paris did good business for that night's opera. Many of the frocks were really beautiful and a few women wore superb jewellery. The men wore anything from a tweed suit to complete evening dress. I am told that anxious questioning by the Brummels of Tel Aviv had failed to elicit the important fact as to whether his lordship was going to wear tails or dinner jacket ; actually he wore the latter, and the pristine newness of many of the " tails " suddenly lost their savour in the eyes of their wearers. To me the most impressive items of the evening were the recitations of a Jewish *diseuse*, by name Shosannah Avivith, a handsome, white-faced creature in flowing white gown, with the tragic red mouth and long expressive eyes of the Orient, who in Hebrew, with an almost heart-rending passion and pathos, declaimed passages from the old Hebrew, from Isaiah, the Psalms of David, and the Song of Solomon, heart-cries of the old world, the agonizing prophecies of the Old and the New Jerusalem.

The crowning chapter of the Balfour visit was on the 1st of April, a date that will be repeated by generations of the Children of Israel in the Jewish history lessons of the future, as from time immemorial our children have repeated the date of the Battle of Hastings.

The previous day, March the 31st, had been marked in the schedule of the Great Man's visit as a day of repose. Surely the Great must have stronger constitutions than we mortals of common clay ! That day of repose consisted for Lord Balfour of a morning spent in interviewing the reporters of every paper in the Near East, an official luncheon of I have forgotten how many score of people, a long speech, twenty-odd



LORD BALFOUR AND THE MAYOR, MR. MEIR DIZENGOFF ; TEL AVIV.



games of tennis, and a dinner party followed by a reception of five hundred people ! A friend of mine who had partnered him at tennis, himself wilted by the game and the heat, in self-defence suggested to his lordship, still cool and fresh, that he might be well advised to give his right hand a rest, considering that he would have to shake five hundred hands after dinner !

Government House at Jerusalem is a fine dignified building though with little of the effective almost theatrical background of the French Government House at Beyrout. In the big ballroom where five hundred of us waited, the house party had taken their places almost before we knew they had entered. His Excellency, Her Excellency, Lord Balfour, Lord and Lady Allenby, passed them all in turn trooped the five hundred, standing about afterwards in self-conscious knots, trying not to peer too obviously at the great ones, secretly jealous of friends distinguished enough to be signalled out for private conversation. A few thirsty souls, sweltering in tightly buttoned new uniforms, jostled at the buffet and surreptitiously called for whiskies and sodas. Everybody pointed out everybody to everyone else. Personally I was busy stalking some Abyssinian archbishops, the gorgeousness of whose red and gold apparel fascinated me, being more colourful and ornate than anything I had seen in the bazaars of Damascus, till my attention was distracted by some dear little brown princes and princesses from somewhere far East, of whose identity no one seemed to be certain, and who seemed to talk no known language.

By one o'clock on the following day the long road across the valley and up the slope of Mount Scopus (Mount of Olives) was thick with people in cars, in horse carriages and carts, on bicycles, donkeys, and their own feet, and all of them in their best clothes, the latter getting rapidly spoiled by the burning sun and smothering white dust. I have never known dust

so pervasive and adhesive as the dust of Jerusalem. Those of us who had started early reached our reserved seats comfortably and easily, those who had lingered over their lunch spent most of the afternoon fuming helplessly half-way up the hill, wedged between the two lines of vehicles.

Surely no more beautiful or memorable site was ever chosen to commemorate a national event than that on which stands the new Hebrew University. On the sheer edge of Mount Scopus it hangs, while below the hills slope gradually down in great billows like an ocean swell after a storm, to the Valley of the Jordan forty miles away. Almost always a faint haze lies over the valley, tinging the horizon with a curious shade of violet and blue. Jericho, a small irregular patch to the left, rests on her stark bed of baked yellow earth with its blanket of leprous scrub. To the right, until lost behind jutting hills, stretches the Dead Sea, sinister and calm with the stillness of death under the shadow of the great Ammân hills, frowning black guardians between the Promised Land and the fierce Unknown of the never-ending deserts beyond.

On that 1st of April, a day of cloudless burning blue, the beauty of the panorama facing us was almost breath-taking, so vast, so serene that it overwhelmed the grovelling fly-like hideousness of us who sat in semicircle below the crest of the hill in rows upon rows of baize-covered seats. Beneath us the mountain fell sharply, so sharply that I could not help wondering if the hundred or so dignitaries who sat facing us on a wooden platform built outwards over a sheer drop of several feet felt the same qualms as I should have done under the same circumstances as to the solidity of the supporting beams !

Almost lost in the vast immensity was the shout that greeted the arrival of the Government House party and the Zionist University leaders gathered together from all parts of the world to do honour to this new-born temple of learning ; from America

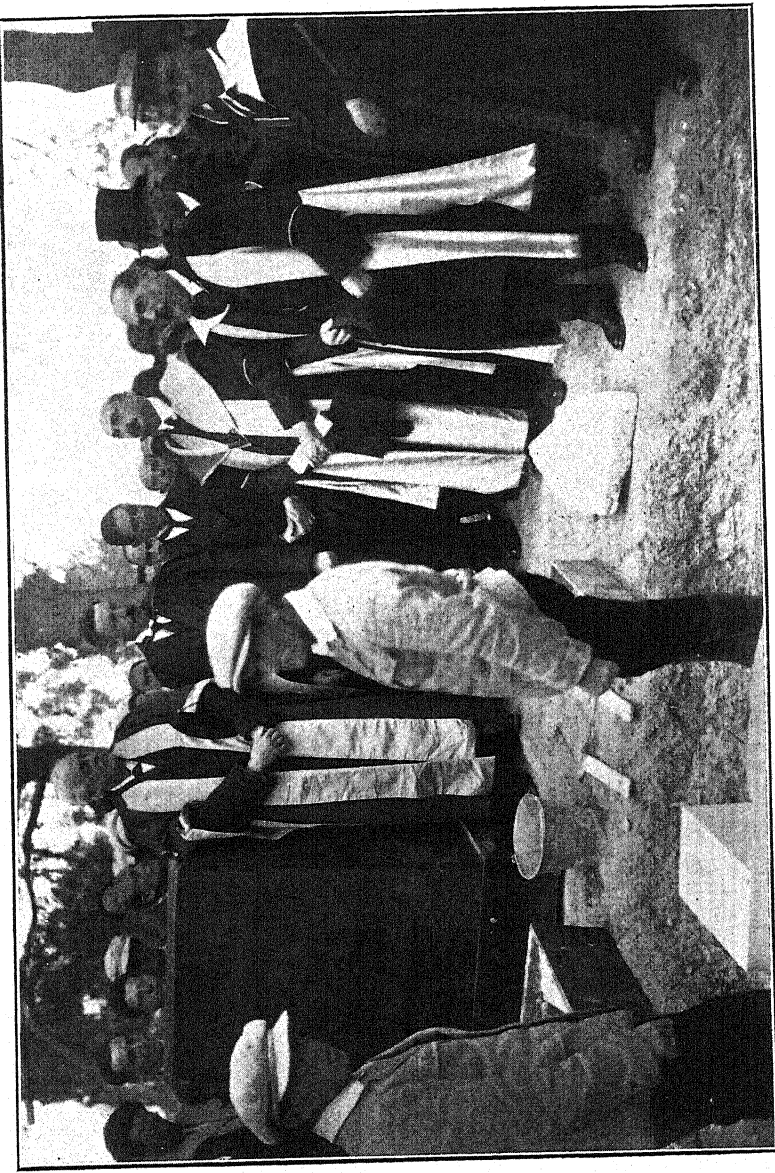
and England, from all the European countries, from the educational centres of the Far and the Near East, Lord Balfour, supported on his left by Sir Herbert Samuel and his right by Lord Allenby, was resplendent in red and purple robes and black mortar-board. The Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim wore a black cloth close-fitting garment not unlike a dressing-gown and a huge toque of long fur that obscured him to the eyebrows and which must have been overwhelming in the heat, for occasionally he removed it to mop his forehead. Behind sat the Governor of Jerusalem and an enormous quantity of Consuls in costumes that ranged from a frock coat to a tweed suit and cap.

The space between us and the dais was filled with Jewish school-children who enlivened proceedings occasionally by shrill sweet singing. In front, on either side, two superb *Cavass* in scarlet and gold stood with the immobility of statues. The hill-side was black with excited humanity and in and out dodged camera men and cinema operators. Next me, in gorgeous robes, sat the Catholic Archbishop of Damascus, behind, a group of Arab Sheikhs whose impassive brown faces showed gave no clue to their thoughts or sentiments.

For over three hours, while the sun sank low on the horizon and a little biting wind sprang up, turning the torrid heat of the day to a withering cold, we listened to speeches in English and Arabic and Hebrew ; first from the Chief Rabbi of the Sephardim, which was undoubtedly impressive though most of us could not understand a word of it, and which went on so long that he had to be gently tugged to the rear by his co-religionists, then by His Excellency Sir Herbert Samuel, whose delivery was almost the most perfect I have ever heard, and whose closing recitation of a prayer in Hebrew (a language with which I believe he is not conversant) was greeted with frantic acclamations. Mr. Chaim Weizman, one of the leading pillars of Zionism, and a man of most out-

standing personality, followed with a really superb bit of oratory, his fluid persuasive southern voice rising and falling in mingled passion and pathos. His speech was repeated in Arabic and Hebrew as was that of Lord Balfour, who for nearly half an hour spoke in his charming effortless cultivated voice, fascinating one with the eloquent gesturing of his expressive long hands, his face slightly tilted back with a genial benign smile. Under the circumstances and with the strange mixture of creeds, opinions, and races that confronted him, his speech was a masterpiece of tact, and over every difficult place he glided with statesmanlike ease. A Jewish poet was the next item on the programme; he erred from prolixity and also had to be gently tugged back to his seat. Then came a prayer by another Rabbi, with the Jewish National Anthem—a stirring and yet sad air—as finale. By this time it was after half-past six and we were all nearly dead of cold, and half an hour later there was standing room only at the Allenby Hotel for the multitude of people who brushed the dust of the afternoon from their garments and called for warming drinks. Down in the town paraded Jews, tired with emotion but calmly triumphantly, happy, dreaming maybe of a new dynasty of which this was the birthday.

For whether one's personal feelings and sympathies be for or against Zionism, the visit of Lord Balfour has undoubtedly fostered and hastened its growth to an almost incalculable extent. It was a theatrical *coup d'état* that to the Jew of Palestine crystallized and made tangible the half-baked dreams of centuries. The ordinary Christian who has merely, through a veil of racial and partially concealed antipathy, seen the Jew in the ghettos of alien lands, adapting himself, with the versatility of his race, to the habits of the country in which it suits his purse and his convenience to live, is apt to regard him as a mere money-making machine who cuts his coat according to his cloth



LORD BALFOUR LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF EINSTEIN INSTITUTE ; TEL AVIV.
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because it is cheaper so, who plays a lone hand because his aforesaid hand is against every man's. He does not realize the intense, almost unique, race and tribal instinct that is one of the most fundamental parts of the Jewish nature. Without this intensity of instinct the Jew would never have been able to survive, physically, mentally and temperamentally, intact, throughout the two thousand years of his exile, without a country, without a name, without the sympathy even of his temporary and unwilling hosts. He has never amalgamated, he has merely adapted himself. Deep down in his heart he has preserved his ideals, has fed even more upon dreams than on pawn tickets! "To Jerusalem next year" has been his talisman through many long lean centuries.

It was with this end conscious or unconsciously in view, that during the War the Jews from every ghetto in the world rallied of their own accord to make a unit in our army. And though the Jews are not by nature a race of fighters they played their part well. As an eye-witness of them said: "Here at last are men, men of blood and spirit who have solved the 'ifs' and 'hows' and are ready to do and die for their ideals . . . the children of slaves but of the blood of princes."

I have heard many people say, "Oh, the last thing the Jew wants is to go back to an unprofitable country like Palestine. There is not enough money to be made there; he prefers to remain here and make it off us!" They are thinking of the rich Jew with a Rolls Royce and a flat in Park Lane, a wife dripping with pearls and a fabulous business "in the City." Incidentally this same Croesus, more often than not, is sending large supplies of money to Palestine, and running half a dozen Jewish organizations for the repatriation and support of his indigent brothers in the ghettos of Europe and America, for a Jew signs his names in headlines only when he contributes to a Christian charity! From a financial point of view,

if the poor Jew (and there are poor Jews in the world, many hundreds of thousands of them, miserably poor, for I have seen them) does not regard Palestine as the milk and honey of sentimental tradition, he considers it to be an infinitely better proposition under present conditions, in nine cases out of ten, than the particular ghetto in which he has hitherto fought for a bare existence. The present conditions or rather the suggested conditions that are almost already fulfilled, have been stated by Dr. Chaim Weizman. "The creation in Palestine of such conditions as should enable us to establish between fifty and sixty thousand Jews per annum there, and to settle them on the land. Further that the conditions should be such that we should be allowed to develop our institutions, our schools and the Hebrew language, that there should ultimately be such conditions that Palestine should be just as Jewish as America is American, and England is English."

Doctor Eder, President of the Zionist Commission in Palestine, goes further. He says: "There can only be one National Home in Palestine and that a Jewish one; and no equality in the partnership between Jews and Arabs, but a Jewish predominance as soon as the numbers of that race are sufficiently increased."

In North America apart from national organizations there are several hundreds of private and moneyed Zionist organizations closely affiliated with the Zionist organizations of Palestine working to encourage the race spirit among the Jews scattered all over that vast continent and to restore that spirit to the young Jew of the second or third generation who has lost contact with his own people. In Germany, too, the Jewish spiritual renaissance is taking on a practical form and many hundreds of young men are being prepared for the life of the *chalutzim* (pioneer) that awaits them in Palestine. On a smaller but equally enthusiastic scale the same work is being carried on in all the other European countries.

A few years ago a legitimate complaint was raised that the Jews who poured into Palestine were the sweepings of the cities in which, even though Jews, they were unable to make a living. This problem has been partially tackled, and the incoming emigrants undergo a stringent examination by the immigration authorities concerning their qualifications as suitable colonists. While I was out there a boat brought thirty-six Jewish poets, members of some literary society from central Europe, who presented themselves as candidates for the New Jerusalem. After mature consideration the immigration officer decided that thirty-six poets were of no earthly use in a new and agricultural country, and the poor creatures were shipped back to whence they came !

Something over fifty thousand emigrants have disembarked in Palestine since the British occupation years ago, of whom only about five per cent. I believe lost heart and returned to their alien homes. During the month of last February alone almost two thousand arrived. It looks as if it were going to be a race between the agricultural and industrial development of the country and the numbers it will be obliged to support. I am told that Palestine can support by agriculture alone some two hundred thousand emigrants of whom, as I have said, nearly sixty thousand are already accounted for. Palestine is by no means the unfertile and ungrateful country that it has been described, mainly by tourists whose "beat" is usually the southern half of stone and sand. They do not see the rich and well-irrigated plains to the north that inspired the old writers to write of Palestine as a "land flowing with milk and honey." Till quite recently only one tenth of the whole country was under cultivation. Doctor N. Salaman, Regimental Medical Officer of the 2nd Battalion during the War, himself an English Jew and a scientist who writes with impartiality, observes: "Palestine is only barren as a result of man hatred ; and it is a vast

monument of the unchristian spirit of all time, a tribute to the Cross, a record of the Crescent, and a reproach to all Israel." Doctor Salaman is a disciple of practical Zionism, for he adds that he would "barter Jerusalem for one growing colony." The future industrial possibilities of Palestine are by no means to be despised, but for the next few years agriculture must be the mainstay of the country and there are still very many hundreds of thousands of acres still untouched by the plough. The Jew by nature, but also very largely from habit and the necessity of his homeless years, is an industrial ; his heart is in commerce, in trading, and buying and selling. But he has proved that he is amazingly adaptable, and it is by his powers of adaptability or lack of them that he is going to stand or fall in Palestine during the next few years. As one of our most able journalists has expressed it : "Palestine will not become a self-supporting colony by means of Jews taking in each other's washing, or selling each other toffee and jam." The new colonies have hitherto been largely supported by subsidies and grants of money from wealthy Jewish patriots and national and private organizations, but in process of time these doles will naturally and quite rightly dwindle, and unless the young Jew can prove his adaptability by becoming agriculturist instead of trader he is going to starve. The able journalist whom I have already quoted, further says : "Town-bred immigrants . . . cannot be made into farmers." I am not altogether sure that he is right ; a Jew can do almost anything if it has money in it, more especially when his national spirit is aroused. He is learning his lesson, already a great proportion of his co-religionists have learnt it before ever they landed, and their children will be born knowing it. That the Jew can be agricultural if he chooses is proved by even a brief study of the thriving little colonies in the Vale of Jezreel, now known as Balfouria, and in the great fertile valleys north of Galilee and Lake Houile.

Jewish opinion on the whole is divided as to whether the eventual spread of Jewish influence in Palestine will in due course mean increase of antagonism between the Jews and the Arabs, or whether the latter, the town-dwellers at any rate, realizing the increased prosperity his tribal enemy will bring to the country, may resign himself to the new conditions and decide to benefit thereby. A few visionaries dream of a breakdown of religious and racial animosities when, so to speak, the lion will lie down with the lamb, "and that none will hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain." One of these is Mr. Israel Zangwill, whose dream was of a world "reconstructed on a basis of love and reason" in which the Arabs could be brought to sympathize with the Jews and magnanimously cede Palestine to her rightful owners and betake themselves to a new state to be in the realms of Arabia. It is not probable, for the Arabs and the Jews, both Semites, though of such widely differing temperaments and mental planes, will always, I fancy, hate each other as only blood relations can do!

Apart from agriculture pure and simple, various industries have already begun to prosper in Palestine; wine of Richon, oil and soap making that in Nablous has been long established, salt, cement, bricks and a variety of building materials. There are nearly three hundred flour mills and there are also thriving industries in tobacco and cigarettes, sweets and honey, gypsum, and tanning, for which latter over two hundred thousand skins of various kinds are used yearly. There is also the possibility of a large textile trade. Further industries, embryo or yet in contemplation, are fishing, marble and stone, of which there are great quantities in Northern Palestine, and glass. Incidentally the northern shore of Palestine is said to be the site of the original invention of glass.

Considerably over a million sterling has been invested for industrial purposes in the course of the last five years by Jews, of which the Zionist Organiz-

ation contributed over a hundred thousand, private individuals three hundred thousand and a hundred thousand by non-Jew sympathizers. Hitherto the chief obstacles to industrial development in Palestine have been the lack of credit facilities, skilled labour and power. The first is the greatest and for the time being the capital must necessarily come from outside, though Jewish financiers confidently anticipate that in the not-too-distant future there will be a proper financial institution to provide long loans for the furtherance of industry. The problem of skilled labour is rapidly being solved by increasing immigration, and local unskilled labour is being largely trained. The question of fuel and power, hitherto a difficult one owing to the high cost of coal and oils, has been dealt with by Rutenburg's scheme, proved practical and successful, of harnessing the waters of the Jordan and other rivers of Palestine for the creation of electrical power and irrigation. The latter is already a going concern in Jaffa and Tel Aviv under the Palestine Industrial Corporation. The Palestine Government is giving all assistance for industrial purposes, and a league has been formed to encourage the use of local manufactures, and the aims of it are fostered in both Arabic and Jewish newspapers. Hitherto the market for export and imports has been limited. Now the Haifa-Damascus overland motor service brings Iraq into range, and the comparatively recent direct railway south, Egypt, and the projected harbour at Haifa will prove a boon to Palestine transport in general.

The trade prospects of Palestine, though still in their infancy, are of a practical possibility. Everything hangs on the patriotism and will power, self-respect, reliance and adaptability of the Jew himself, and a great deal hangs in the balance which the next five years will decide. But a man need not be a visionary only to see a possibility of Palestine, with her unique position midway between East and West, regaining

something, if not all, of her old proud place in the world and endowed with the power and riches lost her by her Moslem conquerors. Who shall say whether the vision is a desirable one, whether it is to our interest to encourage and foster the resurrection of a race that as it increases and multiplies will from its very nature demand a voice in the political corners of the larger world, that will in time have its own aims and ambitions, and will, like Oliver Twist, keep asking "for more," a race whose blood is so different from ours that is in almost every instinct and ideal so at variance with us.

It may be a flash in the pan, this Jewish renaissance, or it may be that we are letting loose a force that in the generations to come may be yet another knot in an already sufficiently tangled world. At present no one can tell. Only time and in particular the next few years, will prove.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEAD SEA VALLEY

AN abomination of desolation, "The Land of the Shadow of Death," a corner of the earth's decay, a tiny patch of our great burning world where death has laid his cold withering hand, a reminder that nothing is fixed, that our planet will one day be but a dead ice-cold star, revolving among a myriad of such others in an eternity of space.

Such is one's impression as one glides down the long hills to the Valley of the Dead Sea. Nothing dims the impression, neither time nor habit nor surroundings. I have gone down to that great well in the earth's surface in all moods, and from a diversity of places, with cheery light-hearted parties of friends, from the vigorous flowery uplands of the north, from the humming life of Jerusalem, beyond the Mount of Olives, under a blazing sun, under a driving rain. But always as we slid out of the hills on to the great desolate plain where glitter the steely lifeless waters of the Dead Sea, a chill ominous finger has laid itself on my soul, and my nostrils have been filled with the dry odour of death. The impression lasts for a minute, but always it is there, and yet to the ordinary traveller the descent to the Jordan is made as unimpressive as possible. An admirable road runs from Jerusalem by Gethsemane, broad and smooth, by which you can make the descent comfortably in forty minutes. If you are not afraid of fleas you can pause for a cup of tea at the Inn of the Good Samaritan, locally known as the Halfway Inn, for the very good reason that it

stands precisely half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho. A little further on a blatantly legible and hideous signboard announces that you have reached sea level. A little later still, unless forewarned, you begin to wonder why your eyes burn, and why you become partially deaf, why it is difficult to breathe, and why your head suddenly feels as if it were encircled by a tight band; a not unnatural phenomenon considering the rapid descent from 2,000 feet above sea level to something like a thousand below it. It is with relief that you feel the symptoms pass off, as your lungs gradually acclimatize themselves to the new atmospheric pressure. Then you roll out of the foot-hills, and the Plain of Jericho lies ahead in all its grey desolation, a wide reach of uneven ground, partially covered with patches of thorn and scrub with the cold uninviting wall of the Ammân Hills looming beyond. You are lucky if car-loads of tourists are few and far between that day, or you will be irritated by the sight of goggled and veiled male and female of the species, dabbling their fingers in the sluggish dead water, squealing at its saltiness, or worse still, bathing in it, too buoyant to swim, bobbing up and down, balloon-wise and undignified.

One of my first impressions of the Dead Sea was by moonlight, and not even the blasé aura diffused by a magnificent piece of khaki and kalpuk that accompanied me could submerge the uncanny power of that smooth expanse of water. It scarcely seemed a mere body of water, but the incorporeal fluid essence of some great spirit of decay that lay at one's feet, brooding and waiting, waiting for something that only it conceived, that had crept out of the womb of time, that laughed a little maybe, at the tiny atoms that strutted and preened themselves unconscious of the decay that lies at the root of all things. Water has in it as a rule a strong sense of humanity, whether it be calm and smiling, gay and rippled, or fierce and destructive. These waters of the Dead Sea, where no weed grows

and no fish swim, seem more deathly than destruction itself, sterile and moribund. Its salt and the chemicals that form its bed give it the glitter of lifeless things, of diamonds, of quartz, of dead men's eyes. Warm live things shun it, no birds twitter or bathe on its shores, grass gives it a wide birth, even the barren hills that rise all round it seem impregnated with its slow creeping death. It is at night that the spirit of the Dead Sea seems to come alive. In the day-time under a merciless sun it is death passive, without malignance, and the air hangs heavy, dry and unrefreshed, as if used up, depleted, without oxygen or life-giving essence.

Its aura apparently affects even the hardened susceptibilities of sightseers, for no one lingers long by the Dead Sea waters ; instead they turn their heads to Jericho, and lunch or tea. How are the mighty fallen ! Jericho, that fell only to the trumpets of Israel, that once was famed as a rich and noble oasis, has now become the Maidenhead or Brighton of the Holy Land ! An easy motor run from the various colonies of our Empire builders, possessing two rough Arab-run hotels, it is a favourite rendezvous of week-enders, or of anyone who wants to dine quietly with someone else's wife. " Let's go to Jericho " has no longer its old classic significance. It means instead, with any luck, a sentimental pilgrimage, a *tête-à-tête* dinner of herbs—or more accurately of stewed mutton, tinned beans and Richon wine—a moonlit drive, and kisses by the waters of Jordan, or in the friendly twilight arbours of Ain Sultan along a shady road by the ruins of old Jericho, made sacred by Elisha, where in the day-time the well-to-do Arab and Syrian population comes to bathe. During the week that I spent at Jericho, working and sun-bathing, scarcely a day passed that I did not come upon some such pair of tender love-birds whose twittering I would have died rather than hand over to the already sufficiently rich crop of Jerusalem tittle-tattle !

It is a queer combination of sanctity and sweethearting, that grim valley of the Dead Sea and Jordan. For kisses echo, too, among the shady thorn of the Jordan at Mahâdet Hadgli where a little path leads to and beyond the spot where, sacred legend has it, Jesus was baptized by St. John the Baptist. At this point, too, tradition goes back further still to when St. Christopher carried the Infant Jesus across the tide and to when Elias made a dry passage through the river by striking the waters with his cloak. Now a motley collection of people alight at Mahâdet Hadgli, including earnest young clergymen who piously fill little bottles with the sacred water to honeymooners and gay picnickers, who joyously pole themselves about in a brightly painted boat, or dally with tea and cigarettes in a little kiosk on the banks. And everywhere, of sacred memory and profane use, grows a harsh prickly shrub technically called *Zizyphus Lotus*, and traditionally *Zizyphus Spina Christi*, that makes, so the soldiers tell one, the favourite fare of their camels, and is for ever known to fame as having, in those far-off days, been used to make the Crown of Thorns.

A queer thing this little grovelling world of ours, when men laugh and play among the dim ghosts of the infinite, where life throbs on the threshold of death, where the immortal atoms of the past take ever new form and substance, and great hopes and tragedies and sacrifices sink in the waters of time, leaving no ripple ; where men and women sometimes, in a quiet moment, pause in their work or play and, half unhappily, gaze for a brief space into the infinite, turning with swift relief to the greater importance of actuality. There are millions and millions of us in the world, yet we are but a handful in comparison with the multitude of those who have gone over, whose undying ghostly essence permeates the globe. There are some places where the ghosts of the past seems to project themselves more nearly upon our consciousness.

Poor ghosts, in Palestine, the land of the holy dead, their pale hands are pushed aside by the rough hands of materialism. In the Dead Sea Valley, in spite of everything, they seem very near to one. Almost I seemed to see them sometimes, when I stood at night looking out over the arid plain and the deathlike rippling water ; some of them sad and reproachful, some of them time-weary, some of them strong in their strength which must endure, forming and shaping the world, knowing that from the dead ashes, life, phoenix-like, will arise on fleet wings. In that grey valley, so near to the great hives of humanity, yet aloof as only a half-dead thing can be, the spot where the earth has begun to rot, one seems to be on the border line of the universe, where for a brief moment, one can see, through the veil of the flesh, the serried ranks of the dead. This many men in their day have found, and all along the Dead Sea shore can be discovered traces of old dwellings, habitations of hermits who lived their sad lives in contemplation and communion with the border line.

And yet there are men who wrest life and its substance from the sea of death. In its waters are mineral properties that would make a man's fortune properly exploited. Though the Jordan pours down over six hundred tons of fresh water every day, evaporation is so great that the Dead Sea water contains twenty-five per cent. of mineral matter. Truly the Dead Sea is salt. One of the finest sights I've ever seen, and reminiscent of a Heath Robinson picture, was a dignified respectable American tourist trying, in defiance of the open Baedeker in his hand that foretold his failure with terse emphasis, to drown an egg. With the air of Canute defying the ocean, with stern forefinger salt as a salted almond, he prodded the egg downwards, and ever and again it bobbed gaily and buoyantly to the surface. The Dead Sea Valley, too, is the haunt of smugglers, who from the Ammân Hills, whose uncharted by-ways give good

shelter to such human foxes, carry in sedate respectable-looking camel caravans, silks, tobaccos, and other dutiable goods for the Western markets, and for Egypt cocaine, so easy to smuggle, especially in the crevices of a Ford car. Till recently, and probably still to a certain extent, everyone was in the game, and the very man doing sentry-go probably had the biggest share in the haul. Only a short time before I went to Jericho a man with a brain wave and a pocket knife who ripped open the back cushions of a Ford full of respectable-looking coffee-coloured gentlemen, found over £2,000 worth of the pernicious alluring white powder. A life of charm and thrill, the life of a smuggler, whose picturesquely won but ill-gotten gains must give far more fun in the spending than the salary of honest toil !

No one quite loves the law in Jericho. One of my greatest friends there was a magnificent and cultured Arab holding appointment under the British, who on many occasions gave me hospitality and valuable assistance. On the occasion of our last meeting he arranged that I should witness a native dance to be held in his house, and it was agreed that he should call for me at nine o'clock that evening. Eight o'clock came, and with it a British official from Jerusalem to dine with me. Nine o'clock came, but not my Arab friend, and never again during my sojourn in Jericho did I lay eyes on him, that is to say except in the far and receding distance, and then only his back. The proximity of a British official who knew a good deal about midnight ambushes and shadowy flittings had given him an uncomfortable feeling in the place where his conscience ought to have been !

Jericho is one of the best rest-cures I know. There is nothing to do there, so one simply doesn't do it. A little ramshackle street of crazy shops, a spasmodic sort of Post Office, two primitive hotels, and a labyrinth of fruit gardens laboriously irrigated, that is Jericho, and I spent one of the laziest weeks I can

remember, coming only to life on the occasions when friends came from beyond the hills on either side of the Jordan Valley to lunch or dine with me. By day one lay and stared at the heat dancing on the great plain of tortured sun-cracked mud, where the patches of thorny bush seemed by some ocular trick to advance and recede like a ragged grey army of ghosts. The air in this hole in the world lay slumberous and burning and heavy, numbing effort of mind or body. No life stirred in the heat of midday save perhaps far above, a faint speck in the blue vault of the sky, a vulture that hung watching with keen greedy eyes for the last convulsive death spasm of some little furry animal. For hours I used to lie inert, idly dreaming, till a faint freshness imperceptibly crept into the atmosphere at sundown. Then it was very pleasant to wander aimlessly through the tangle of gardens at the back of the village where the air was pungent and heavy with the scent of orange blossom, past groups of bronze boys and girls coming back from work, to the upper slopes under the looming bulk of the Mount of Temptation, where one could pause and watch the violet and blue shadows deepen on the Ammân Hills, and the faint fore-glow of the crimson sunset blending and softening their harsh ragged outlines to a kaleidoscope of shifting semi-tones, and the thin streak of the Dead Sea take on a steely glitter. Sometimes behind a dune sat an Arab shepherd boy, absent-mindedly playing a little tune on a tiny instrument made out of a reed, a little whining tune on three or four notes that rose to meet the sunset, that sounded like the piping of Pan himself.

And way up above, higher than the vultures, an hour's strenuous climb up a narrow path, there is a nest of kindly human eagles who will give one rest and refreshment of soul and body. This is the "exceeding high mountain" where the Evil One carried Jesus, offering him all the glory of the world in return for his soul. The Crusaders themselves

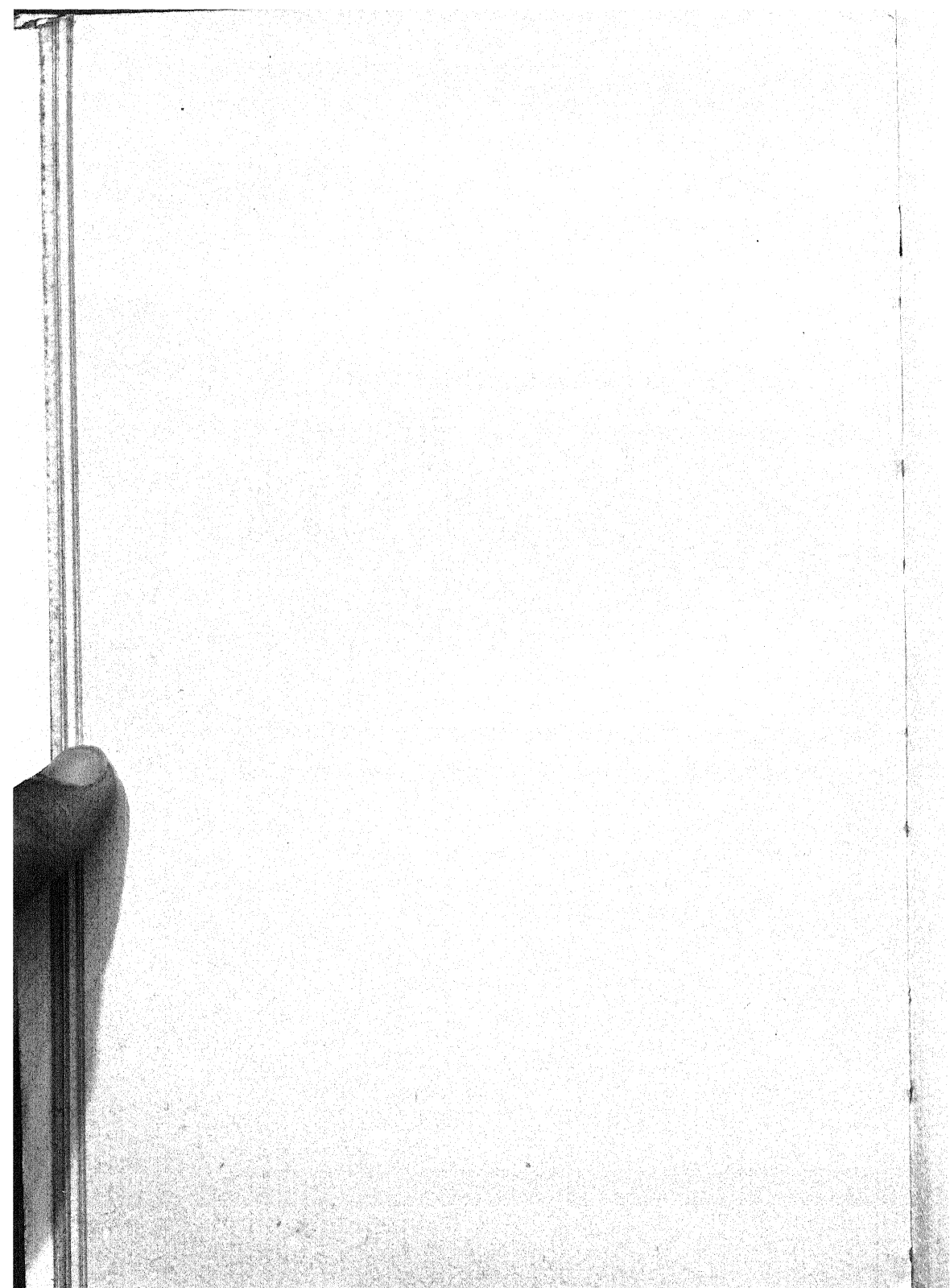
found a Convent, even then very old, perched like a wild bird's nest on the spot where the path ends, and on the opposite side of the ravine, on the sheer face of the precipice, is a large cave where lived a holy anchorite, said to be Saint Chariton himself, dependent upon such food and water as faithful followers let down to him by ropes from above. From below, the present Greek monastery appears but a mass of jutting rocks, slightly more regular than the rest, that might possibly be formed by the hand of man himself. As one climbs breathlessly upwards, trying not to look down at the dizzy depths of nothingness below, the handiwork of man takes more definite outline, till, panting, one reaches a heavy wooden door. I'm afraid my greeting to the smiling black-hooded monk who opened to me was wheezy and incoherent, but he appeared to take it as a matter of course, and led me and my Arab escort up some vaulted stone steps into the reception room where we were greeted in faltering French by the head monk. Never have I met such truly adorable people as that little colony of Greek monks marooned in mid-air, such a mingling of simple warm humanity and saintliness. Never do they see the faces of their kind save for chance travellers like myself, or when one of their number goes down to the valley where their gardens lie, to get provisions. And yet they are gay, of a childlike geniality, not averse to a joke, or to a sly dig at the predatory habits of my escort, or to a bumper of liqueur brandy which they shared with us over a dish of biscuits and tiny home-grown bananas.

In the rocky grandeur of their eyrie only the room we sat in was an anachronism, but one of which they were intensely proud ; a little square room furnished with hard knobbly chairs that looked as if they had been bought in the Tottenham Court Road, hideous gaudy carpets, and framed oleographs of our gracious King and Queen, and of the Queen of Holland. For the rest the monastery is a series of natural caverns in the rock and vaulted chambers literally

laid against the mountain side. We lingered reverently for a moment in the tiny chapel, where there juts through a slab of mother rock, on which our Lord is said to have stood on the height of His Temptation. From a little wooden balcony, the sole frivolity they have permitted themselves in their stony living sepulchre, one can stand, glancing breathlessly away from the thousand feet of empty air down which a clumsy movement might hurl one, looking out over a magical landscape that, as the sunset catches it, is outlined like an enchanted map, where Jericho stands out like a little beehive and the great expanse of the Dead Sea glitters like a live malignant thing, and the Ammân Hills opposite seem to stand like frowning sentinels between the Holy Land and the vast burning tracks of the Arabian Desert beyond.

And ever the Dead Sea valley alters, as one looks at it—alters every minute of the day and night, modulated by unknown changes of atmosphere, shifting as if indeed there hung a veil between the seen and the unseen, as if those beyond the veil, those who have gone before, had taken a whim to change the *décor* of their earthly Paradise, to tantalize us who yet linger with the promise of vision. It is a spot in which one could not live, in which it seems as if life would slowly pass away by some process of attrition, but in which one lingers, caught up in its sub-human spell. So I lingered in drugged content till the time came when I must bestir myself to cross that frowning mountain range to the fierce uplands of Transjordan that lay beyond.

TRANSJORDAN



CHAPTER I

TRANSJORDAN

It is not a thing to be undertaken lightly, the journey from the Dead Sea Valley across to Transjordan, if you are squeamish about hairpin turns, greasy narrow roads, and dizzy heights : in other words if you have any particularly strong objection to the possibility of being hurled over high precipices into rocky valleys below, with not enough left of you to make a decent funeral.

After seeing the arrival of a friend of mine, a man of war and sinew, from that same journey, with a wheel off, a white face, and a voice that called loudly for large whiskies and no soda worth mentioning, I just sent up prayers for a spell of fine weather, when the road, being less slippery, is minimized as a short cut to the next world. My prayer increased in intensity after a well-meant piece of advice : " Don't take the box seat, take the near back one, so that if she goes over the edge you can jump." And when the time came I made strong representations concerning various bulky pieces of luggage tied on to the near step, that I considered might in a moment of stress impede the flea-like quality of my jump.

It was like moving through the nethermost regions, the day that I left Jericho. As we bumped and rocked across the dusty plain, the air lay stagnant and heavy, seeming to weigh one down, and the sun scorched till it felt as if the very marrow of one's bones were being melted down for soup. Across the Jordan where, at the big trestle bridge, native officials went through our luggage with suspicion, there stood, at the bottom of the foothills, a big encampment of wild predatory-

looking Arabs, with superb horses, the nucleus of King Hussein's summer camp. A village of biscuit tins it looked, for except for one little baked mud building, most of the huts seemed to be constructed of this useful commodity. It is quite surprising the amount of uses to which old biscuit and petrol tins are put in Eastern countries ; in fact, there is nothing, it would appear, that they cannot be used for, and old beer-bottles suggest many neat if incongruous uses to the ingeniously minded.

From the camp of King Hussein, the road began to climb, and the murderous weight of the atmosphere lightened a little, permitting one's lungs to do their work properly, and loosening the sick restriction of one's head. The road became steeper and steeper, and on the left there seemed a great deal too much naked atmosphere between oneself and the solid ground below. My prayer for dry weather had been answered, and the surface of the road, that shelved abominably downwards, gripped fairly well. At this point, when we had neatly negotiated a corner on two wheels, my fellow passenger, an affable polyglot Syrian, touched me on the arm, with a beaming smile, and pointed to the road ahead.

"We have dreadful accidents on this road sometimes," he said. I looked at him with distaste, but fearing he had failed really to interest me, he pointed again to a five hundred feet of sheer drop. "That," he continued, "is where the Sheik — fell a year ago. All they found two days later was the carburetter and his turban."

I could well believe it—I, who have no head for "heights." I felt a faint chilly perspiration break out on my nose and around my ears, but decided it was a waste of time to fish out my powder puff, for it was obvious that I might use up a whole boxful before we reached Es Salt. Instead, I turned to him, and said with polite finality :

"That is very interesting, but I should be very

grateful if you would reserve any stock of similar stories you may have till we are at the top."

Thereafter I believe the scenery was fine, but I did not particularly notice it. I had arranged my feet in the "fifth position," ready to jump if needs be, and hoping we should not meet another vehicle in a road on which it was obviously impossible to pass anything larger than a fly, kept my eyes glued on the solid wall of rock on the near side, a foot or two from my nose.

At the end of two most unhappy hours up the Mountains of Gilead, we reached Es Salt, a neighbourhood that has uncomfortable memories for many of our lads in the winter of '18, and that by some writers is supposed to be the site of ancient Gadara. Its approach is picturesque, as one runs up a steep ravine, with its neat, well-kept square houses, and its dark wild-eyed population, to whom the advent of a Ford car is an event of moment. Somewhere in the mountains round about is supposed to be buried the old Ark of the Covenant that so mysteriously disappeared after the Fall of Jerusalem, and many grave and learned gentlemen, as well as "stunt" mongers, have spent much time and money in searching for it.

After Es Salt the road gained in repose what it lost in rugged grandeur, running and curving over broad table-lands, where there was no sign of living thing, as far as eye could carry. After the sinister oppression of the Dead Sea Valley, the air, crisp and bracing, went to one's head like strong wine. The only blot on my restored equilibrium was the temporary loss of my favourite suit-case that, breaking loose from its complicated moorings of string, privily left me under cover of darkness, and necessitated a wearisome search with the tail lamp of the car, along some fifteen miles of bumpy road. In the dark immensity that loomed all round, I felt as futile as one who tries to pour the ocean into a bucket, till against all hope and expectation I found it leaning drunkenly over a

minor precipice, patiently dribbling hair-tonic on to a small plantation of trees some few hundred feet below.

It was long after sunset when I reached Ammân, my temporary objective, and, the shapeless ugliness of the town for the time being blotted out, all one could see was a galaxy of tiny twinkling lights that clustered in a deep cut in the dark hills, and above, brilliant in the cool clear air, the crescent of a new moon, that hung as if guarding the stronghold of the Ammonites, symbolic as the crescent of the East itself. For all its remoteness, the wild desert-bred manners and bearing of its people and its lack of white influence, Ammân by daylight has an air that is oddly urban. It looks, in a wild untidy way, busy, commercial and brisk. There is none of the happy-go-lucky "leave it to Allah" air of most Eastern towns, there is no *flanerie*, no coffee drinking or dalliance. Everyone seems to know what he is going to do next, and to be in a hurry to do it. There are an inordinate amount of shops, native shops of course, but big and brisk, heaped up with every kind of native and European merchandise, mostly nasty and meretricious. It reminded me of the cheaper Souks of certain towns overrun with tourists of the also cheaper kind. Since there are no tourists in Ammân, or in Transjordan, I asked who were, vulgarly speaking, "mugs" enough to make a demand for so much rubbish—cheap hideous mirrors, cheap hideous silks and cottons, carpets made in England and Germany, household chattels that would fall to pieces at the first hint of use. But the wily Ammonite knows his business, and lays out his horrible wares to tempt with infallible certainty the innocent nomad from the inner deserts of Arabia. Ammân is London, Paris and New York combined to the Bedouin who has travelled in for many hundred miles of stony empty desert. Except when he comes to Ammân he sees no vestige of a shop all the year round. In the Ammân shops with

their bright lights and gaudy display, he goes as crazy as a woman in a bargain sale. With his bag of money hoarded through long patient moons, he buys and buys, and buys, satiating his soul of few possessions with all that is gay and showy and tricky.

They are a fine-looking crowd, the men and women of Ammân, tall and wild-eyed, with free proud gait, and even the town-dwellers have the air of those used to big spaces, with none of the languor and cat-like suppleness of mind and body of the Arabs of Palestine, men who it would be better to have with than against one in a "scrap," women whose blood runs warmly and swiftly. Among these swarthy bronze children of the desert, stand out, with startling fairness, a number of blue-eyed Circassians, Christians who of late years have settled in the towns of Transjordan.

On the fringe of the town, and under the lee of a high frowning hill, lies a great vestige of the past glory of Rome, the well-preserved half of an enormous amphitheatre. A little further, on the other side of the valley, stands the new palace of the Emir Abdullah. Till quite recently this affable and courteous potentate used to encamp with great luxury and an army of tents outside Ammân, and the new palace is the pride of his heart. Personally, I thought it hideous. Square and stark as a doll's house, it stands flat-footed on a high prominence, without a garden, without a background of any kind, looking oddly like a gigantic cinema hall that has lost its way. Below it, in the almost sheer face of the hill-side—a queer contrast in habitations characteristically Oriental—are a number of natural caves, inhabited by poor Arabs, who from convenience have turned troglodytic, to whom a cooking pot and a rug seemed to represent the sum total of human possessions.

To my great regret, the Emir, to whom I had been going to pay a visit, if my arrival in Ammân had not been of necessity postponed, had left a few days previously for Akaba, on an arm of the Red Sea, to visit

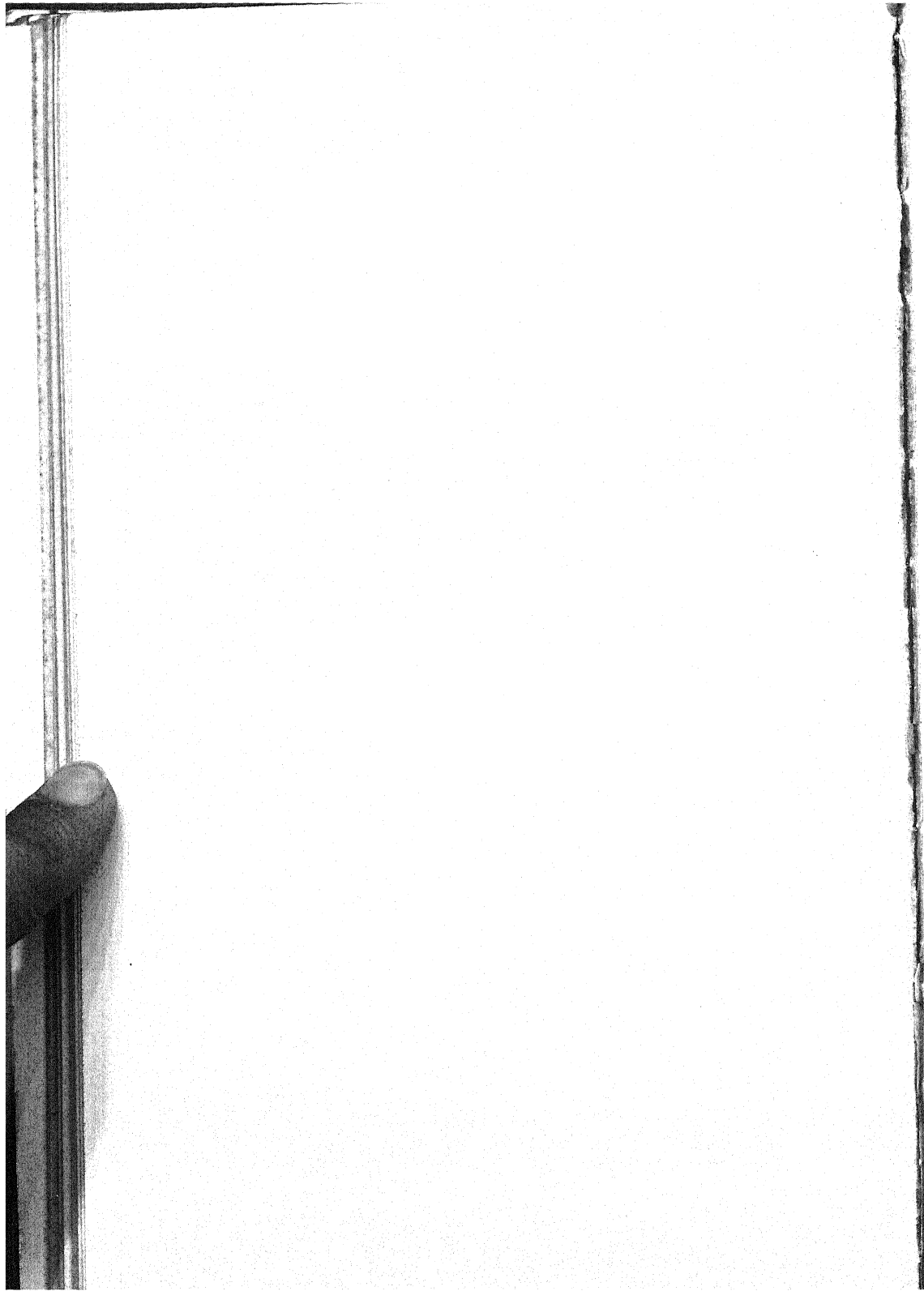
his father, King Hussein, on a quest, so local rumour had it, not uncommon between father and son—in short on a matter of finance. In the not so old days, the wealth of the Emir Abdullah, like that of his father and brothers, was, to our way of thinking, immense, and, the soul of generosity and lover of all things bright and beautiful, he spent it with regal prodigality, and made lavish presents and entertainment to his friends. But our prudent Near East Government clipped the golden wings of his Arabian Nights Dreams to a comparatively paltry few thousand a year. Much of his former glory has been shorn from him ; even when he travels south, as on this occasion, he is not granted the use of the local railway king's private coaches. Unless he wishes to be crowded higgledy-piggledy with a heterogeneous crowd in the ordinary compartments, he must needs travel by motor like a common mortal, for he has of course many bitter enemies among the Wahabis, who, under the redoubtable Ibn Saud, from time to time overrun the borders of Arabia Petra, and who, in their lust to kill a scion of the hated Husseinite family, might also wreak much havoc on a sacred British railway coach. Of a genial and sociable disposition, with more of the velvet glove and less of the iron hand than his brothers, the Emir is in sympathy with modern art and culture, and is occidental in the broadness of his tastes and viewpoint. Even he has promised to use the largest and most splendid of his state apartments for informal dances to relieve the tedium of life for the handful of white inhabitants in Ammân.

Ammân is the first stopping-place of any importance of the great incongruous yet romantic railroad that runs south to the holy town of Medina ; I say incongruous because to anyone who has seen the great cruel barren pilgrim-routes that run from the holy cities of the Hedjaz to all parts of the earth, north, south, and east, there seems something incongruous in the sight of a tolerably commodious railway



THE EMIR ABDULLAH OUTSIDE HIS PALACE, AMMAN.

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with its suggestion of modernity and utilitarianism carrying its ragged freight of humanity on its mystical errand. Pilgrims I have seen by the thousand on those same cruel roads, half starved negroes and slim Arabs, worn to a mere bundle of skin and sinew, from the far-off regions of the Niger, and Lake Chad, who without food or money of their own, have walked several thousand miles through the waterless horror of the most murderous section of the Sahara ; travel-weary, but ever neat and courteous Hindus, and Parsees and Persians from the other side of the Tigris, who by devious routes have crossed the dreary flats of Iraq and the inner deserts of northern Arabia ; wild-eyed, yellow-skinned Mongols with broad faces, from the lands of snow and icy winds of Central Asia ; rich merchants whose leisured progress of enormous camel caravans is like the dream of some old Oriental potentate of ancient times. Everywhere, and under every condition, have I met these pilgrims of a sacrosanct quest, in Pullman cars, in rough dug-outs, in luxurious steamboats, in well-appointed motors, in jolting lorries, on camel, horse, mule and donkey, and on foot. Some of them are rich, but most of them have started with nothing but what they stood up in, often knowing no word of the language of the country through which they passed, buoyed up only by their infinite faith, and stoically meeting death sometimes by hunger or thirst, by cold, or by treachery.

And through Ammân they pass by train. The line starts at Damascus, built some twenty-five years ago by Abdul Hamid, financed by voluntary contributions from all the lands of Islam, and constructed by Turkish soldiers under European engineers. Maan, in Arabia Petra, about 280 miles south of Ammân, is the last point upon which Christian infidels may set foot ; even the engineers who built the rest of the line were Mohammedans. The road runs through an infinity of grey desert, peopled mainly by mirages, to Medina the present railhead, though a further section is

projected another four or five hundred miles to Mecca.

Ammân is an important junction, where all passengers must change trains. My visit was too early in the year to coincide with the great yearly pilgrim caravan leaving Damascus in the month of *Dou'lkade*, which is no set period according to our calendar, in that the Mohammedan year has but 354 days, so that one Mohammedan month runs the gamut of all four seasons in the space of thirty-three years. But already, in late March, pilgrims were coming down in considerable numbers, crowding the third-class carriages to bursting point, travelling for preference, many of them, on the roof, curled up on their mattresses, surrounded by their cooking pots and chattels of travel, hanging like great clusters of flies. Between trains they camped on and round the Ammân station, ragged and travel-worn, making an inhuman smell and chatter. Here and there among the familiar Arab types, were the broad slant-eyed faces of men from Turkestan and Tibet ; a fair sprinkling of women too, tired and docile and a little bewildered, crouching over tiny fires of sticks, holding their veils closely to them. Rather a wonderful and a touching band, travelling painfully and without hope of material gain to their spiritual goal.

The upper stretch of the Hedjaz railway is a bunch of very sour grapes indeed to the Wahabis, that predatory, recklessly brave tribe of nomads whose capital, El Riad, stands in the heart of Nejd, to the north of the great desert. Their ruler Ibn Saud for the past year or so has not only been occupying much space in our newspapers, but has made a fresh epoch in the annals of Mahommedanism, by wresting the holy cities from the Husseinite dynasty, which had held them for so many years. The rights and wrongs of the case bring one into a tangled network of Arab politics, beyond the power of most of us to unravel, but undoubtedly the Wahabis are mighty men,

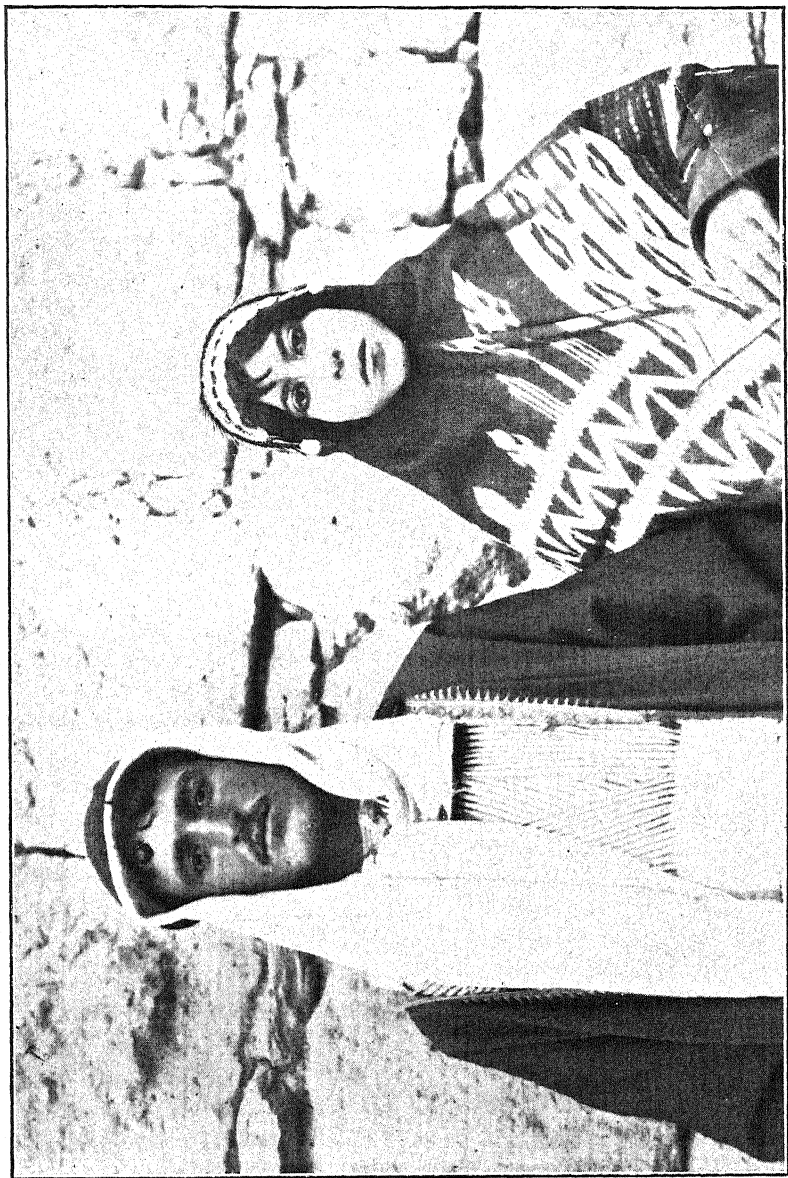
handsome, brave and intelligent. They would like to be friends with us again, as once before in the past they have been, but by reason of these same politics and the partisanship into which our Government has elected to throw its weight, they cannot, and for our greater safety and convenience we have decreed El Jauf as the nearest point to which they may approach us.

To the south-east of the holy railroad, beyond the Djebel-Aared, lies a land of cruelty and desolation, the Rab el Khali, a waterless desert, over a thousand miles square, that stretches from Mecca to Oman, and almost down to the Gulf of Aden, a desert that no white man has yet crossed, and but few Arabs ; utterly arid, utterly dead, a piece of the earth's surface that has been cursed by God, so the Arabs will tell you. So frightful is it that also, they will tell you, camels sniff the air, and falter, showing signs of uneasiness, when, on the fringe of it, their heads are turned south, seeming to know with the queer sense of their kind that before them lies a country where man nor beast can venture.

Further to the north in the Hauran a little to the west of Deraat, another junction of the Hedjaz railway, is the headquarters of the Druses, who have been giving so much trouble lately to our neighbours the French. They are comparatively new-comers to the Hauran, having fled in self-defence from the wild mountains of Lebanon about sixty years ago. Their history is one of wars and rumours of wars. Their religion is the child of a hundred superstitions, and is a species of offshoot from the Chiïtes. About a thousand years ago their originator Hâkim Biamrillah, Calif of Egypt, gave himself out as a re-incarnation of Ali the son-in-law of Mohammed, and his followers made many proselytes among the inhabitants of Lebanon, now Druses, then a Syrio-Arab tribe that had cut itself off from its neighbours. They call themselves Mououahhidin, which interprets as "Unitarians,"

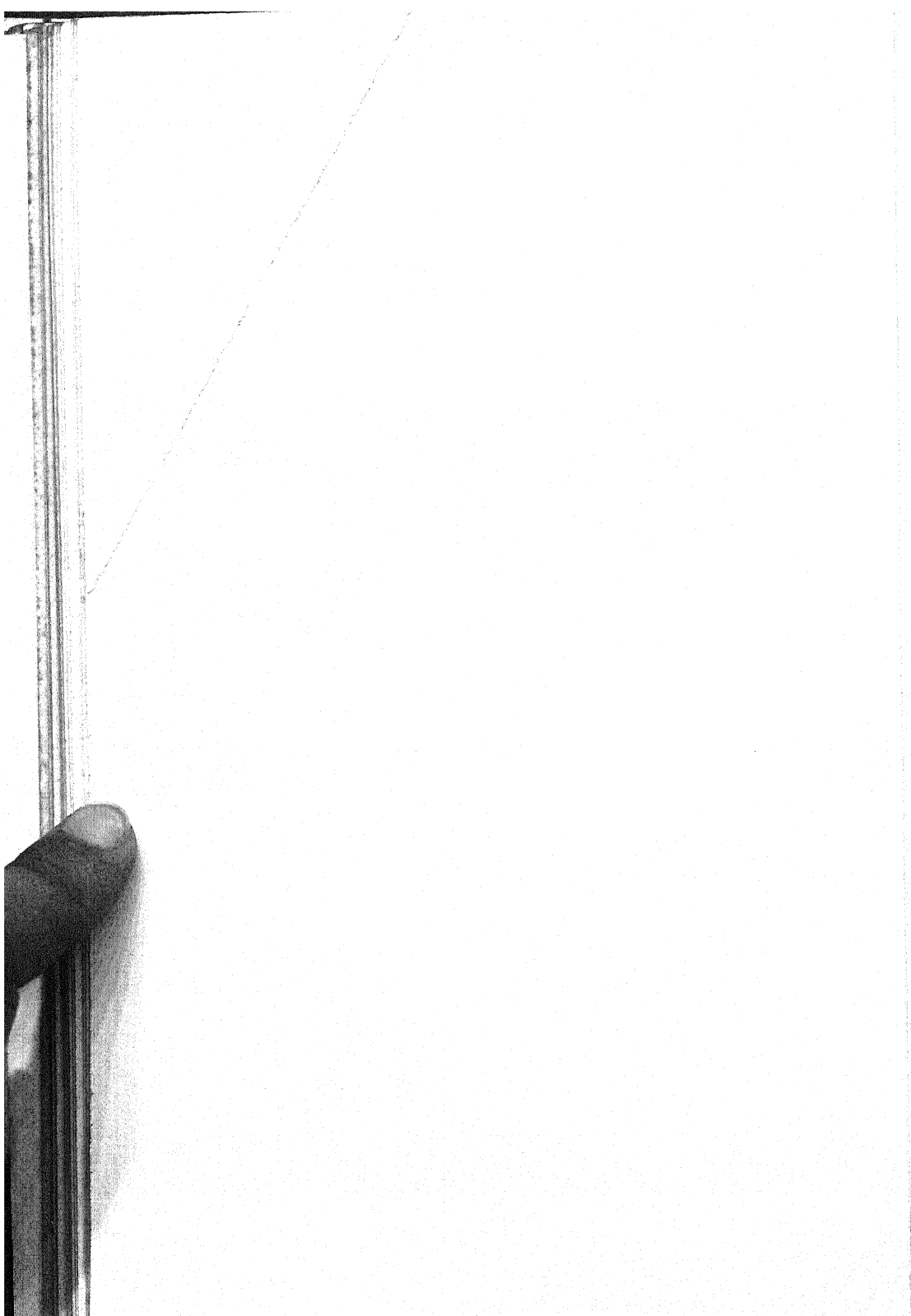
for they believe in a sole God, who will again, in the form of Hâkim, appear upon earth. The Druses have an intelligence far above the average of Arabs, and if they had possessed more unity among themselves, would have been a force to reckon with, even greater than they have so recently unfortunately proved themselves. They are extraordinarily courageous and handsome, with vigorous frank faces, and infinite courtesy and charm of manner, and on the few occasions that I had brief conversation with them they gave no hint of the revolt and prejudice against white men that they carry in their hearts.

But Christianity has found a resting-place even in the wild hinterland of Transjordan. A long and bumpy motor run over extremely rough road gave me a day at Mâdeba, a little prosperous but infinitely isolated walled town built among the crumbling vestiges of an old Roman colony on the site of an even older Moabite city. Soon after dawn I started in the face of a tearing easterly wind, that swept those bleak uplands of Moab. Scarcely a sign of humanity did we see, only here and there, each on a little elevation, a farm that looked like a fortress, surrounded by high walls strong enough to keep off any predatory nomad force that might attack. Mâdeba, that turned out in force at the sound of our car, is a colony of Greek Catholics with a Mission School run by Syrio-Arab teachers. Personally I admired the courage and touching zeal that upheld it, but not its handiwork. Without cynicism or disrespect, I wonder why missionaries of whatever race or denomination, always succeed in making the God they teach so unattractive. I have said that the Transjordanian, man, woman or child, is a handsome creature, picturesque and dignified in every gesture, and to the last fold of his garments. Here at Mâdeba, in a couple of whitewashed rooms made to look as much like a mission house as possible, amber-skinned, sloe-eyed maidens, lovely as hardy desert flowers, minced sedately in clothes of horrible



BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM ; MADEBA.

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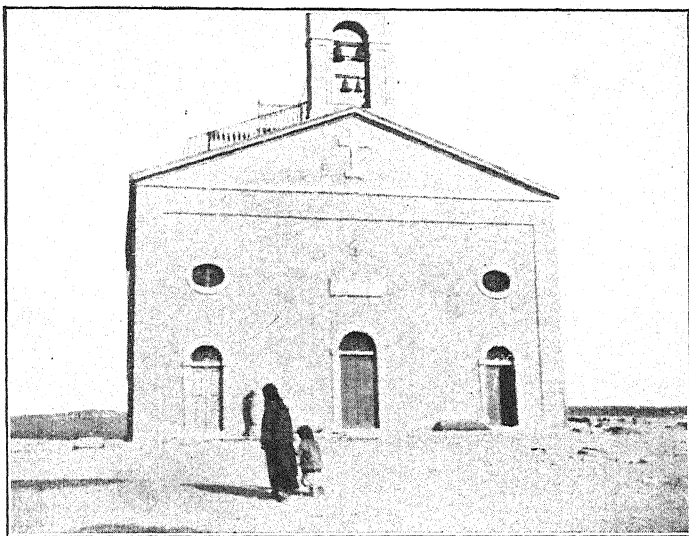
European influence, taught to sing Methodistical hymns in the nasal whining that is the Arab method of song, in English of which they did not understand one word or iota of meaning, and with their fine strong hands, built to milk a cow, to weave and make and pitch a tent or ease the weariness of a tired brown warrior, taught to make odious little anti-macassars, and doyleys of drawn threadwork. So much for feminine human nature the world over ; a recitation of the Catechism faltered and broke down while half a dozen gazelle-eyed houris of the flapper age, nudged each other and pointed at my legs which, encased in the usual "sunburn" stockings, fascinated them by such an expanse of what to their unaccustomed eyes appeared bare skin !

But I am ungrateful, for however inartistic the form their zeal may take, the Christians of Mâdeba are a simple, earnest and delightful people, who received me with warmhearted spontaneous hospitality, who worried because I could not eat at least four helpings of the simple but good food they had done their best to prepare as closely as possible to their conception of European tastes, and regaled me with coffee and sweetmeats, and sickly sweet beverages, and invitations to return in the houses of as many notables as I had time to make the round of.

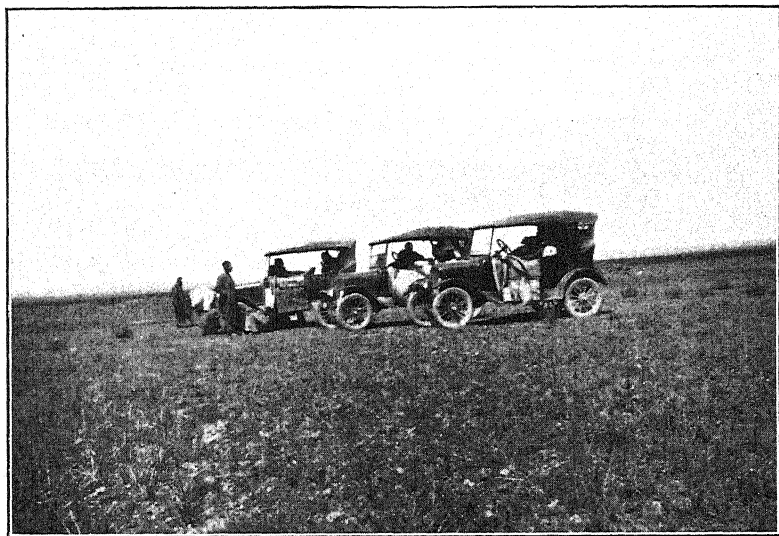
To me the most interesting point of Mâdeba was the church, or rather the floor of the church—the church itself is modern and sufficiently ugly, built on the remains of a Roman basilica—for covering part of its surface, and still in excellent preservation, is what the Greek Patriarch who took us round declared to be the oldest map in the world. If not precisely that, it is indubitably the oldest existing map of Palestine, done in mosaic, and I regretted that I had not more time in which to study it. It showed distinctly the slight variations in the course of the Nile that time has wrought, and its plan of ancient Jerusalem alone would thrill a student of ancient Biblical history.

Of white civilian population at Ammân there are less than you could count on your fingers, but Ammân is an important centre of our Air Force. Its quarters, crowning a high hill above the railway station, form a beacon on dark nights, with a blaze of electricity that streams like a conflagration over the broad plateaux. Neither officers nor men are allowed to bring out their wives or children, for the district is none too settled, and scrapping of a tolerably fierce nature takes place from time to time, too near and too often to make Ammân a health resort for anything as little mobile as a family. It is a lonely life for them, good fellows and cheery withal, perched aloft in their eyrie, dependent for society other than their own upon chance visitors and occasional short spells of leave to Palestine. But they have dug themselves in comfortably enough, with a large attractive mess, of which I retain memories of pleasant hours over cups of tea and cool drinks in long glasses. Ammân boasts a gramophone or two, and dance enthusiasts, but no partners, and I have memories, too, of cheery impromptu hours, most inadequately one among so many, spent dancing without a single pause, till it hurt me to breathe, and the perspiration poured down my face.

A name to conjure with in Ammân is that of Peake Pasha, a young Englishman who with his second in command, Stafford Bey, has formed and trained that rather unique body, the Arab Legion. The conception of the Arab Legion came originally through the Foreign Office a few years ago, and is designed to weld the interests of our brown brothers with our own, and to utilize for defence the illimitable fighting material in a country of natural fighting men. It contained, at the time of my visit, somewhere about 15,000 men, divided into cavalry, infantry, artillery, and camel corps. The infantry bring their own horses, fine wiry desert-bred beasts, and all are commanded by native officers. They are a mobile force, and scour the desert for very many miles round. Not a year

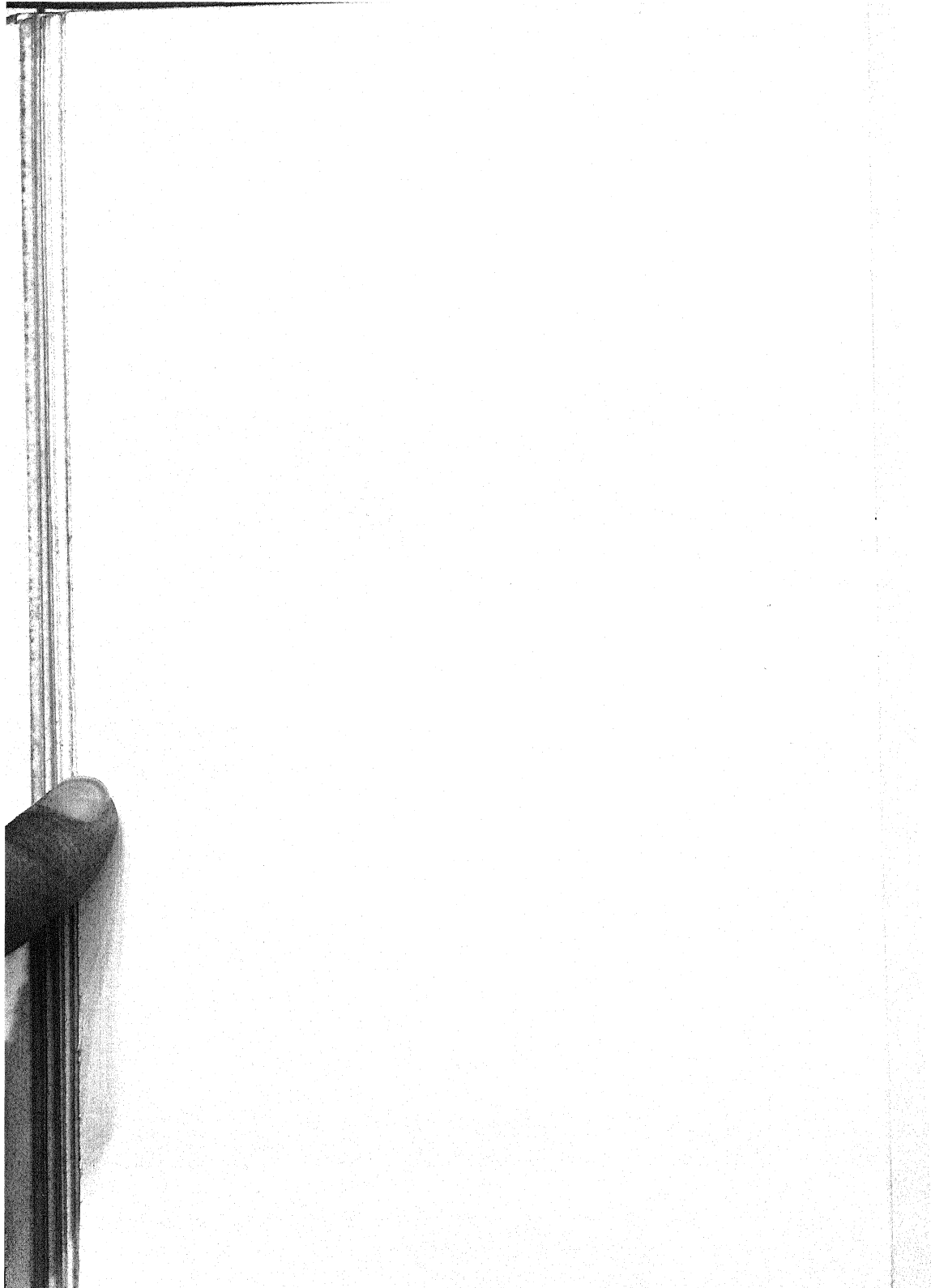


CATHOLIC CHURCH AT MADEBA.



CONVOY RETURNING FROM MOSUL.

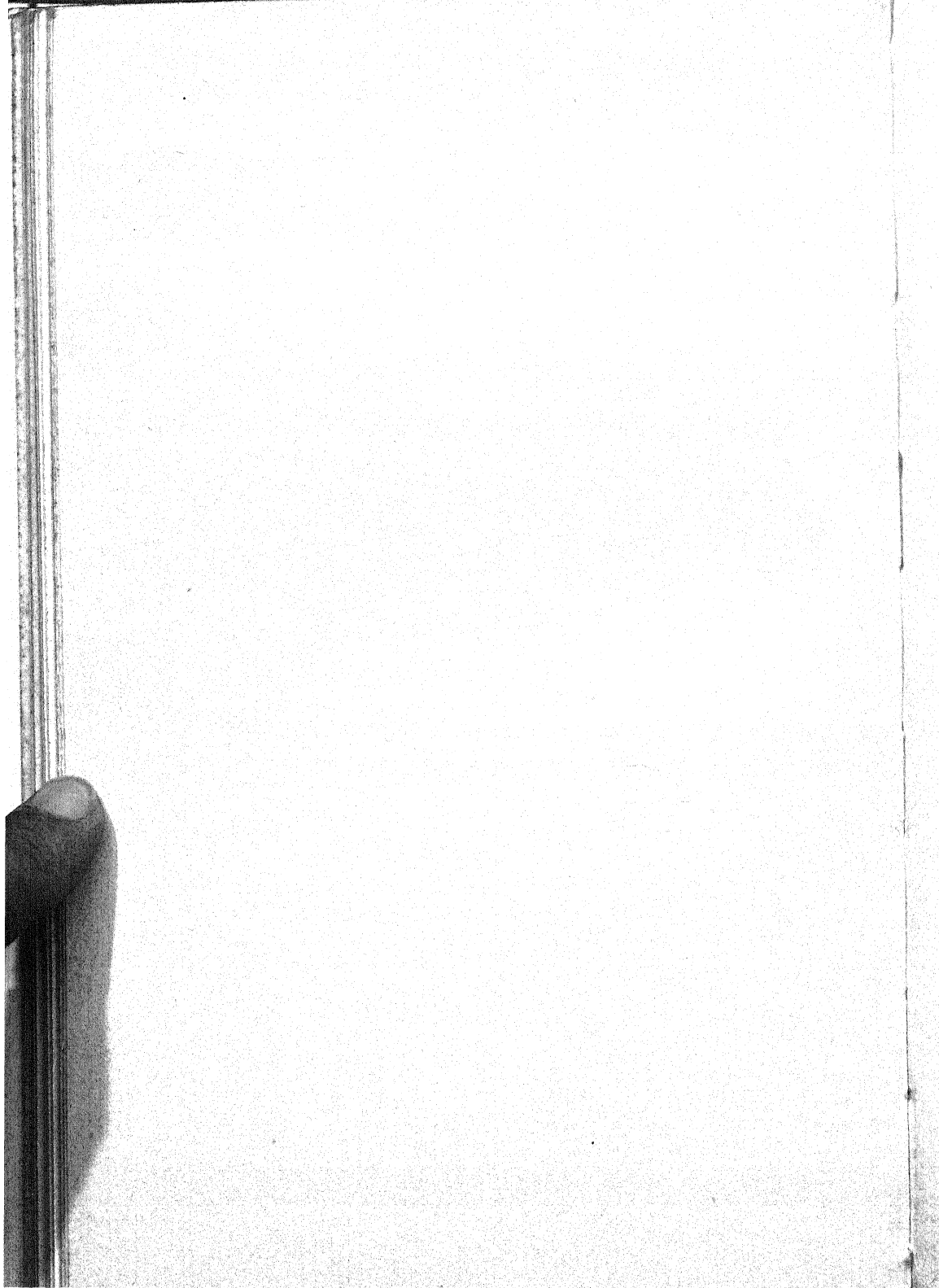
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has passed without a successful "scrap" against native insurgents, and in their last they put the fear of God into the hearts of the Wahabis themselves. Their camp was just below the house in which I stayed, as I remembered with painful intensity every morning at sunrise, when I was awakened by piercing, nerve-shattering bugle calls. I was shown every detail of their admirable but still incomplete installation, and it was really extraordinary how much had been achieved in so remote a spot in such a short space of time. Among the men were a wide variety of Arabs, the history of some of whom was wisely not too closely inquired into. There were a few Arabs, even, from the Sahara, and one, a middle-aged homesick N.C.O., almost wept with joy when he found that I knew intimately a certain little walled city of the M'Zab country, that circumstances of which he preferred not to talk would probably prevent him ever seeing again. There were musicians, too, among them, especially among the Algerian contingent, and one night in the house of Stafford Bey, I listened to three of them, as they made music on the instruments of their country; music that carried me back to nights in the outposts of the Sahara, nights when I crouched over a blazing camp-fire for comfort against the icy wind of a desert night, when all around me loomed the lumpy outlines of hooded men and sleeping camels, and I listened as the nomads chanted of their prowess in love and war, or sat in the aromatic stuffiness of some tiny Café Maure, watching the Ouled Nail girls, with their wedge-shaped faces and brilliant staring eyes, as they writhed and swayed through the hierarchic, half-obscene dance of their tribe; music that sent a little savage thrill tingling down my spine that stirred a longing I had temporarily forgotten, a longing for the great open spaces, and the lure of the nomad's road.



IRAQ



CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE DESERT TO IRAQ

OF all the queer religions in the Near and Middle East, that of the Yezidi, or Devil Worshipers, of Kurdistan and Northern Iraq, whose territory lies to the north of Mosul, struck me as the queerest of all, and most decidedly to be investigated.

Between me and Mosul, that stood like a stern angel with a flaming sword of British officialdom and disapproval, stretched many miles of stony desert dissected by the River Euphrates and a few low ranges of hills. The easiest and most obvious route was across by Nairn Transport from Damascus to Bagdad from which Mosul is but a day's journey. But like the dog that is rabbiting, I was conscious of the earth on my nose, that I was committing a political misdemeanour trying to go up to the Kurdish frontier at all, and that it was better to take my medicine when I got there than to be sent back ignominiously half-way.

Aleppo struck me as the best jumping-off place, being in French territory, with nothing but the sand and the sun and the sky between me and my objective, and though almost roadless, the hard surface of the desert makes it practicable enough by Ford car.

The better the day the better the deed, and Easter Sunday found me with a Christian Arab chauffeur in a ramshackle Ford car heaped up with food and water, and petrol prepared to negotiate some four hundred and twenty miles of the desert to Mosul. And lest any tyro should be surprised at my mention of a car, I must explain that all the best people cross deserts in Ford cars nowadays, except under excep-

tional circumstances, or unless carrying bulky merchandise. The Arab with his faithful camel will soon be blotted off the picture post-cards. As someone expressed it to me : " The ship of the desert has been turned into cutlets ! " The present-day car of certain makes can go pretty well anywhere that a camel can, a very great deal quicker, and in the long run more cheaply. The American car has filched from the desert most of its picturesqueness and local colour, and the novelist of desert dramas will, I'm afraid, be sore put to it to stage effective elopements. There were few things more suggestively beautiful in silhouette than that of the predatory nomad and his string of camels against the skyline. He was Biblical, he was beautiful, he was symbolic. The same creature packed sardine-wise with half a dozen others into a battered " Tin Lizzie " with his feet hanging over the side, surrounded by lumpy, almost obscene-looking bits of luggage tied up with string in counterpanes and towels, is prosaic and unimpressive. Worse, he is a blot on the landscape.

Certainly I, on my start from Aleppo with my motley car-load, was a blot of the blackest description. The French car proprietor had asked me whether, as I hadn't much luggage, I would mind an Arab family—*très gentille*—occupying the back seat as far as Deir ez Zor on the Euphrates. As the greater the weight the less you bounce over stony going, I said I should be delighted, and when, sleepy and yawning, I came down at dawn on Easter Sunday I found my car almost buried from sight under an astoundingly diverse and oddly-shaped accumulation of baggage, and inside, packed like kittens in a basket, what I took to be an Arab gentleman and his harem. I did not count them, and only many hours later did I realize that there was a child among them, and then only because the car turned over in negotiating too steep an incline, spilling us down a bank, and the child fell on top of me. All day long they kept up a ceaseless chatter-

ing and giggling, and every time we stopped for water or a minor repair, one of the harem came to the surface and was quietly sick over the side of the car. It was quite wonderful how accurately she timed her attacks of indisposition, though I couldn't help thinking that she would feel better if she ate less sweets and pea-nuts.

The last comparatively civilized meal I was to enjoy for four days was at a little *estaminet* in the midst of nothingness where we stopped for half an hour at midday. I took it in company with three N.C.O.s of the Foreign Legion, who cheerfully grumbled as Légionnaires always grumble, about their food, their equipment, their quarters, their officers, about their lot in life in general.

"*Un régiment d'ivrognes*, drunkards, mark you!" exclaimed the youngest of them indignantly. "That's what he said to me, the *sacré commandant*. *Quel chameau!*"

Seeing that I smiled involuntarily he turned to me. "What do you think, *petite dame?*" he asked.

We fell into conversation and became firm friends when he discovered that I knew the Foreign Legion well, in its headquarters at Sidi Bel Abbès, at Colomb Bèchar, and a score of little sunscorched outposts of the Sahara.

Poor Légionnaires, who have such an undeservedly bad name among the ignorant. Some day the true history of the Légion will be written, and it will not be an inglorious one. For it is an utter fallacy that the Légion is recruited entirely from criminals or outcasts. The Légion only differs from other regiments in that it does not ask any awkward questions of its recruits concerning their past life, or even the authenticity of their present names. With a certain practical wisdom it argues that a man may become a good soldier even though he has been a bad or unfortunate man, and it gives him the benefit of the doubt. Its men are drawn from a wide variety of nationalities.

I have met Levantines, Scandinavians, Spanish, French, Americans, white and black, and a great many Bretons and Alsations and Germans, and since the War there has been a great influx of Russians, especially among the officers. All these join up for a variety of reasons, often for escape from financial difficulties, from domestic or sentimental troubles. One man told me he had hidden in the Légion from a jealous, nagging wife. Some join from a spirit of adventure, from a dislike of a stereotyped existence, a craving for the great remote places of the world. Here and there, but not as often as one might imagine, one comes across a dark horse, who is a mystery to his comrades and superiors, possibly even to himself.

I remember once while motoring in Algeria, our chauffeur stopped to water his engine and it happened that a gang of *forçats* (convicts) of the Légion were working there, in two long rows, breaking up and clearing the rocky surface of that arid soil. Feeling rather diffident, I followed the other tourists who wanted to see these poor pariahs at closer range. Most of the latter kept their eyes lowered sullenly on their work, but the haggard, undaunted-looking boy nearest me, observing my camera, called out : "*Faites moi une photographie, mademoiselle.*" I did so, and asked if I could send him a copy.

"*Pas permis,*" he whispered ; then, with a warning glance at the warder who approached : "*Madame . . . rue . . . Marseilles. Ma sœur.*" His poor face was quivering with eagerness, and I rather wanted to cry.

Year in, year out, they live, the Légionnaires, many of them in a murderous climate, in a soul-destroying solitude and monotony, where not even a tree breaks the vast burning horizon, seeing no woman's face, no face but each other's. They have built roads and bridges and wells, and barracks and houses for luckier folks to live in ; they have fought every inch of their way against savage tribes ; they have helped to make and preserve France's great

African possessions. Many of them are violent men, and some are bad ones, many of them have sinned less from evil than because the civilized world was too small for their turbulent spirits, and many of them have found in the manner of their dying a glory that life could not have given them. Their romance is a grim one, but they are men, not brutes, and in all my varied experiences of Africa—not always pleasant ones—I have found many a worse gentleman than the *Légionnaire*.

The day passed in a long dream of heat and great unbroken immensity of sand and sky. Once, when we passed through a low range of dunes, Jacoub, my chauffeur, touched me on the arm.

"Look!" he said, pointing to the track ahead of us that was cut in deep twisted ruts. Across it lay a great ominous rust-coloured streak.

"Blood," he said, tersely.

"Whose blood?" I inquired, sleepily.

"Bandits, last week. He was the chauffeur, and they shot him to stop the car. It is believed that they escaped south to the hills, but one cannot tell. It is to be hoped that they do not know that an *Inglese* is passing this way who carries money. Always they like to stop an *Inglese*," he added, brightly.

"Don't be so cheerful about it," I said, crossly.

The day was dull and overclouded, and we were passing through the country of mirages. Hardly once was the horizon clear of a tantalizing vision of blue rippling water. Sometimes I saw a flock of grazing sheep or a troop of horsemen riding towards us, and once I saw a mirage—a rare one—of a great battlemented castle with towers rising high into the air, and terraces running down to a silver blue lake.

By next day, after a not too comfortable night spent in a police outpost, the party behind had lost their awe of me, and we all made friends over a bag of pea-nuts. From the freedom and the facial adornment of the ladies, and the unrestrained manner in which

they greeted and embraced such male friends of theirs as we passed on the road, I had some time since discarded my harem theory, and eventually gathered that they were an Arab theatre troupe on their way to play at Deir Ez Zor, and later at Mosul. They were good souls and cheery, but attracted an embarrassing amount of attention wherever we stopped, more especially as until explained away, I was usually taken for part of the troupe. Waley, the man of the party, who had spent some years in Egypt and learnt English ways and ideas, was undoubtedly a most obliging soul, who spent his time doing little things for me and would never eat or rest till assured that I had everything I wanted. He tried me rather by sitting with shoeless feet and holes in his socks dangling over the side of the car, to the utter detriment of our dignity, but later in the day, as the heat grew really unbearably intense and the engine beneath me began to scorch my shoe-leather, I followed his example, only retaining my shoes. The ladies were Nasira, a rather subdued soul, very much kept in the background by Alyse, a buxom coffee-coloured wench with the whitest teeth in the world and the repartee of a London barmaid, who had an instantaneous success with the men whenever we stopped anywhere for a moment. She took a great fancy to me, calling me "Chérie," and telling me various highly-flavoured anecdotes of her wandering life. The small girl she called her sister, but was in reality her daughter; occasionally the unfortunate child, forgetting her rôle, would call her "Maman" whereat Alyse used surreptitiously and viciously to pinch her.

Once or twice that day we touched the southern shore of the Euphrates, at Méskéne and Rakka, running low and sluggish between flat banks of yellowish-grey, lightened here and there by a little dull greenery, somewhere about half-way down its long course between its source in Old Armenia and the Persian Gulf. Otherwise the horizon was un-

endingly desolate and flat. Sometimes the going, over rocky desert with a hard surface, was good and we made a fair speed ; sometimes through dunes and low hills, it was unspeakable, and the old car rattled as if she would fall to pieces. Never had I realized what a car can do if it likes. Mine, though she had the appearance of a sixpenn'orth of scrap iron, could swim like a frog, climb like a cat and crawl like a ferret. Sometimes we put her at the most impossible-looking obstacles, but never once did she refuse.

At sundown we reached Deir Ez Zor, a big, straggling, dirty, native town on the Euphrates, the last military outpost of the French, where the Bedouins come in from the desert to trade their merchandise. A few smart French officers mingled with the crowd of ragged, stealthy-looking Arabs, who stared suspiciously at the sight of a strange white face and sometimes called insults and obscenities as I passed.

We found accommodation for the night at the native inn, a series of small empty rooms giving out on to a big courtyard filled with broken-down lorries, animals and merchandise. Waley, Nazira and Alyse were having the time of their lives, and under pretext of bringing me my supper from the Arab cookshop, seized the occasion to show me off to all their friends, in particular the other members of the "theatro" company. For over an hour, as I installed myself for the night in my ten feet square cubby-hole, a stream of visitors poured in and out : Bedouins in gaudy striped abbayas and caffias, horrible half-caste young Arabs and Syrians, with evil pallid faces, dressed in abominable reach-me-down suits of European manufacture, dancing girls with sickly pock-marked faces, scarlet lips and heavily blacked eyes, dressed in a minimum of tawdry finery. Alyse took the keenest interest in the contents of my suit-case, and falling with a squeal of joy upon my cold cream, face powder and other cosmetics, proceeded to re-make up her face. It was hard to stop her without hurting

her feelings, but it was with a distinct pang that I earned her surprised gratitude by presenting her with my favourite stick of lip salve after I had caught her with it lavishly rouging her own lips and those of her lady friends !

The manners of the Arabs of this part of the world are not good, but apparently they are inherited, for a writer of the last century who travelled extensively along the Euphrates says : "The Arabs of the present day, in the countries we are describing, appear to have retained only the vices, while they have lost the virtues of their forefathers." The same writer, Eliot, differentiates strongly, though, between the Bedouin and the Arab of the towns. "A stranger," he says, "would scarcely be offended by being plundered by the Bedouin, while even a compliment from the cultivated Arab is disgusting." In most of the Arab countries I have visited I have found the same thing. The nomad tent-dweller, though generally a knave and often a murderer, is always a gentleman, but the sedentary life of cities and villages, or the restricted life of farming communities, seems to have a deleterious effect on the Arab, bringing out all that is vicious and ignoble. "There is no respect shown to the denizens of Rakka," says Eliot, "to age or person, except perhaps to those who have the most impudence." And this seemed to be true all along the line, though I would not go to the lengths in which he described the natives of a little further down the river, not far from Deir Ez Zor, as "worse than Russian boors, Bask or Calmucks, their manners brutal, their conversation indecent, the women as bad as the men."

Nowhere in this part of the world is the Arab standard of morality high, it would seem. Notorious for their unchastity are or were the women of the Shammar, a powerful tribe that lives on the banks of the Euphrates. Layard in one of his books relates with humour an altercation that took place between a Shammar chief and the Sheikh of the Jebours.

"Dost thou not know," cried the former as the crowning insult, "that there is not a village in the Pashalik of Mosul in which the Arab name is not dishonoured by a woman of the Jebour?"

"And canst thou point out," was the crushing rejoinder, "a man of the Nejm who can say that his father is not a Jebour?"

The night was a disturbed one. There was no bolt to the door, so as a precaution, when my motley friends had finally left me, I propped my baggage against it. But I forgot the window, and in the middle of the night, I was awakened from a heavy sleep by a scuffling sound, and saw in the moonlight the figure of an evil-looking Arab, a knife stuck in his belt, three-quarters through the window. Hurriedly I aimed my revolver. I did not know the local dialect, but the revolver spoke more eloquently than words, and with a startled grunt my burglar disappeared into the night. But I hadn't enough luggage to barricade both door and window, so slept rather lightly until dawn.

First thing in the morning I was down in the town trying to disentangle the innumerable bits of red tape necessary before I could proceed farther on my journey. We were in the midst of Rhamadân when no one may eat or drink or make love to his wife from the rising to the setting of the sun, and all the Moham-medan officials were extremely bad-tempered and obstructionist, and the Customs officers, to my extreme fury, turned every one of my tightly-packed bags inside out in the dusty road. Eventually they assured me that all was in order, and among a chorus of fare-wells from my "theatro" friends, who looked very grubby and unbuttoned and disillusioning in the strong morning sunshine, and who, one and all, borrowed various small sums of money off me, I set off for the Euphrates, that ran round the back of the town. While I was still pondering as to how I could transport a car across a broad swift-running river without a bridge or a ferry, a contingent of men on horseback

swooped down on me with the information that my papers still lacked the most essential signature of all, that of a certain "Monsieur le Directeur," who had not yet arrived at the office. A brief palaver sent up my temper, that was already in rather a feverish state of health, to boiling point. It was, as I have said, Rhamadân ; Monsieur le Directeur, a Mohammedan, had spent the night in feasting and family gaiety ; he was tired and did not propose to rise from his bed till midday, or possibly even till five o'clock. He had been informed of my nationality and my need, but quite definitely he did not mean to get up. Indeed, he thought it likely that I might care to remain on and enjoy the beauties of Deir Ez Zor until the following day.

"Where does Monsieur le Directeur live ?" I inquired, grimly. After some pressing they reluctantly informed me.

"But he is in bed," they reiterated, piteously.

I had myself driven to the house of the sleeping one, and knocked loudly at the door, while some score or so of natives gazed at me, open-eyed, as if aghast at my daring. I stepped over a woman and a couple of children who answered my knock, and brushing aside a few others who would have stopped me, crossed the courtyard and went up the steps. Arab houses are not complicated in design, and peering in through various doors and windows, I soon came upon a recumbent gentleman snoring peacefully. I went in.

"Monsieur !" I called ; but he went on snoring.

I took him sharply by the shoulder and shook him. He opened his eyes and stared at me with sleepy surprise.

"Get up and sign this !" I said, peremptorily.

"Urgh ?" he grunted, drowsily.

"Get up and sign this !" I pushed the papers under his nose. He was so surprised that, still half-asleep, he did so, and in ten minutes I was back at the Euphrates to tackle the problem of getting the car

across. I was in a very bad temper. By now it was nearly midday—half a day's travelling was wasted, and I had lost all chance of reaching decent accommodation in which to spend the night.

At last, after over an hour's superhuman efforts under a grilling sun, I succeeded in getting the Ford hoisted on to a flat wooden raft, and propelled by a dozen half-naked men with long oars, we pushed out into midstream. But the frail craft was heavily overweighted by the car, not to mention thirty or forty Bedouins who had crowded aboard, a strong wind was blowing, the river was in flood after recent rains and the raft rocked perilously. The oars were of little use, and we were running rapidly down stream. Women screamed and rushed up and down ; men cursed and yelled to the people on the shore, who watched us with the placid unconcern of the fatalist towards the troubles of others. Some of our people jumped overboard, and started to swim, but were swept away by the current, and one man was drowned some fifty feet from us ; others were thrown off by the swaying of the raft. I was far from happy ! I am but a most moderate swimmer, and could expect but scant chivalry from that savage panic-stricken horde. Apart from the swirling water below us the car had broken loose from her moorings, and at any moment I expected to be crushed by her lurching. It was indeed a case of the devil and the deep sea !

"Allah ! Allah ! Y'Allah !" howled the mob in a monotonous crescendo.

At last, by the mercy of Allah, the pace of the raft slackened. Frantic efforts on the part of the boatmen had steered her out of the current into shallow water, and we drifted harmlessly on to a sandbank. In a few minutes we had waded ashore where I sat drying myself on the bank while Jacoub, my chauffeur, with a prodigious display of energy and profanity, salvaged the car.

While I was taking a short stroll along the bank I

noticed an Arab making off in the opposite direction with one of my kitbags, my favourite one, containing all my papers and more precious possessions. I called to him to stop. He paid no attention, but continued to race the horizon faster than ever. There was no one within sight or call, so I had but one resource. Again I aimed my revolver, calling "Drop that, or I shoot!" He hurriedly dropped the bag and resumed his flight empty-handed, while I lugged my bag back to the bank, and, to take no risks, sat on it till the car was ready to start.

That day seemed doomed to misfortune, for scarcely had we left the Euphrates well behind us than we ran into a sandstorm. I have been in some pretty bad sandstorms in my life, but this was the worst I have ever known. There was nothing on the vast flat horizon to break its violence; a burning *campseen* gale blew that scorched our faces, making the skin feel as if it were being flayed with a rawhide whip, cramming the sand down our throats and ears and eyes, stifling us, filling every crevice of our clothing, and worst of all, making all but our tinned food inedible. We had lost all sense of direction in the burning whirling darkness, bumping over sharp rocks till it seemed as if every joint in one's body were being wrenched apart. We drove inch by inch, by instinct. But it was safer to go on than to stop. Once, when Jacoub showed signs of exhaustion I took a turn at the wheel, but soon had to give it up. That afternoon was a nightmare the like of which I hope never to experience again. That night we spent in the open, crouching under the lee of the car, and it was an even worse nightmare than the day had been.

By dawn the *campseen* had nearly died down and we had picked up the trail again. We were very thirsty, for our water was running low, we had missed the post where we had hoped to fill our skins, what we had had been silted up by sand and, moreover, had to be saved religiously for the car. In the afternoon we passed a

band of ragged nomads who stopped us with the information that there was a band of wandering brigands in the low hills ahead of us who the night before had lightened a traveller of a hundred and fifty pounds' worth of stuff. This was, as we knew, the riskiest part of the route, but there was no other way by which we could cross the hills. Jacoub looked at me inquiringly.

"We have got to chance it," I told him with more nonchalance than I felt. "It's not a hundred miles now to Mosul, and we must push on if only for the sake of food and water. We may not run into them.

"Taib!" he grunted, philosophically, and cranked up his engine. Half an hour later the car ran into the hills.

"Look!" said Jacoub.

A few hundred yards away we saw half a dozen heads peering over a rock and the gleam of the sunshine on the shining barrel of a gun.

"Out of their range, the sons of Shaitan!"

"Let her out!" I called to Jacoub, who nodded grimly. He jammed down the accelerator, sitting low in his seat, while I slid down on to the floor, and the car shot forward, bumping and swaying horribly. We could see the sons of Shaitan making their way with uncomfortable speed towards a narrow defile ahead of us with the evident intention of shutting us off. As we came level with them two shots rang out, more in spite than in hope, I believe, for they fell far short and behind us, and in a few minutes we had shot out of the hills and were racing safely away in the open desert.

The wind had died down and rain was falling heavily, the belated spring rains for which the scorched countryside had been praying for many weeks. It was after nightfall when we reached the outpost of Badir that approximately marks the boundary between Syria and Iraq. It consists of three large black tents flying the Iraq flag, standing in the midst of an unbroken desert flat as a gramophone disc where live

fourteen of the Emir Feisal's desert police, who are stationed here and there in the northern desert to protect the more dangerous of the caravan routes. Looking at the tents, I hoped, in view of the rain that drove down in tropical torrents, to find shelter for the night, but I was sadly disappointed. My request, interpreted by Jacoub, elicited the fact that one tent was packed full of merchandise, another contained the cooking arrangements and materials for the mighty feast with which the patrol at midnight was going to break the long day's fast of Rhamadân, and the third was where they proposed to sleep themselves, the sanctity of which, it appeared, though I might be dead by drowning by morning, could not be polluted by the presence of a woman. No argument could move them, though I finally lost my temper, and threatened them with all the wrath of Mosul, and of Heaven itself, and though Jacoub with ready invention represented me to be everyone of importance he could think of, from the Colonel's wife at Mosul to the Queen of England. It was pitch dark and one could see nothing, but I could feel the rain sluicing along the hard ground, and the fierce white dogs that snuffled suspiciously round my wet feet. We turned the car with its back to the rain and ate our last solid provisions, some half-dozen sandy sardines wrapped up in a bit of newspaper, and sat in the car to wait for the morning. Anyone who has ever tried to sleep in the front seat of a Ford car in a deluge of rain will realize how pleasantly the night passed! There is no support for one's back or head, no room for one's legs, and the seat is far too narrow for lounging. I tried every attitude I could think of, from winding my legs round the steering-wheel to hanging them over the side. Each attitude seemed to give one a worse crick somewhere, and to catch the rain more than the last. Eventually I gave up all attempt to sleep, and for eight hours, till the sun rose, I sat bolt upright, feeling as clammy and wet as a frog inside and out, with stone-cold feet

and burning head, and a toothache in every joint. I have never known a night seem so long. I hated the world and everything in it, and most of all I hated the little cold wind that as the rain ceased, sprang up to herald the dawn, and laid spiteful fingers on my wet face and body.

We did not wait for the sun to rise, but at ten minutes to four as the pale watery foreglow showed us our direction, we started off, just as we sat, without breakfast or the smallest kind of toilet. Two of the patrol came with us as protection, perched on either mudguard, and as the sun came slowly up, I could see what splendidly picturesque-looking creatures they were, well over six feet, with slim, muscular bodies dressed in immaculate striped draperies and red *caffias*. They carried long damascened guns, and knives stuck in their belts, and as we raced along they leant forward, raking the horizon with fierce bright eyes under bent brows. Certainly they lent a touch of grandeur to our ramshackle and filthy Ford car, and our equally ramshackle and filthy persons, and though I suspected that their guns were more beautiful than useful, and did not know how effective our guard would have been in the event of attack, yet I could not help reflecting that if we must die, our death would be a singularly impressive one !

At six o'clock, by which time the sun was up and the world had begun to feel less like a disused charnel-house, we reached Ain Ghazel, the official frontier of Iraq, which consists of a large mud building on the top of a slight elevation. Here one began to feel almost in civilization, for a sleepy and ill-tempered Arab emerged rubbing his eyes, and demanded our passports, and announced his intention of examining our luggage. Another car, outward bound from Mosul, was ahead of us and for two hours I sat in an atmosphere that began to approximate the orchid house in the Botanical Gardens, waiting for my turn.

"So much for my cherished hopes of lunching in

Mosul," I said ruefully to myself as I lingered over my last half-dozen acid drops, very glutinous and stuck together, after having spent the night with me in the rain. I thought regretfully of a sardine that in a lordly manner I had cast to a police dog last night as being too sandy for personal consumption. Acid drops do not make a nourishing breakfast when one has been partially starved and overworked for four days and nights. I had a pain under my belt and my head had begun to ache abominably. As the Customs officer began to unstrap my kitbag the chugging of a car was heard, and a Ford, almost as disreputable as my own, laboured up the little hill. A joyous voice called my name and half a dozen eager brown faces smiled at me from behind a heterogeneous assortment of luggage, and I recognized Waley, Nazira and Alyse, and a couple of their "theatro" friends. They had started from Deir Ez Zor, it appeared, some twelve hours after me, with instructions to catch me up if possible, and travel in unison for safety. They had missed the sandstorm, they had been frightened out of their lives by the brigands, they were very glad to see me, and very, very hungry.

Though touched by their friendliness, I was scarcely in a mood to be sociable, more especially as the luggage of the "theatro" party was an object of the gravest suspicion to the Customs officer, and for another hour we sat in the sun while every article of their oddly-shaped, multitudinous and intricately fastened baggage was opened and ransacked. The ground was strewn with rags and tags of tinsel and their uses explained and demonstrated, also feathers and "properties," and war almost literally to the knife was waged over certain suspicious articles. The members of the "theatro" seemed suddenly transformed into tigers defending their young, all except Alyse, who sat quietly apart, a cracked mirror propped on her knees, doing a careful and meticulous "make-up."

By midday we were off again on a three hours'

run over arid, undulating country to Tel Afer, a big, untidy mud town hanging over the edge of a deep wide gulley, where our arrival created the keenest interest and excitement.

Tel Afer is not much to look at to the civilized eye, but I blessed its name, for it showed a few traces of white man's influence, that influence that one is so apt to disparage when well-fed, but that ultimately means food, baths, soap, bed and clean clothes. The old castle that crowns its apex had been turned by the Turks into a small fort now utilized by us, the British; a neat squad of native soldiers drilled under a torrid sun, and out of the town towards Mosul ran a decently constructed road. Tel Afer, probably the ancient Telassar of Isaiah, was a town of importance according to the old chroniclers, and of comparatively late years has been three times besieged, destroyed, raped and plundered by Ali Pasha of Bagdad, Hafiz Pasha, and Injeh Bairakdar Mohammed Pasha. For a time it ran a semi-independent show of its own, owning but part allegiance to Turkey, but hand-in-glove with the Bedouins of the neighbourhood and the Yezedi, in various nefarious sources of enrichment. Its inhabitants are of Turcoman origin, and according to Jacoub have a bad name for primitivism even among their primitive neighbours. He solemnly assured me that they are friends with the lower animals, speaking to them in their own tongue!

I believe there are several "sights" to be seen in Tel Afer, but I plead guilty to not having seen any of them. When I visited it I would not have made six unnecessary steps to witness the end of the world itself. I had got a touch of the sun and I was so shaky with fatigue that I had to hold on to the side of the car when I alighted and the world was going round me in broad swirling bands, and when it didn't go round and round, it went up and down. My whole being was one vast prayer to arrive at Mosul, and find something in the shade to lie down on. I was parched with thirst,

but did not dare drink the water from the well in the market-place, as I had been warned previously against drinking the water of that part of the country, and it made me weakly furious to see my Arab friends, with the cast-iron insides of their kind, drinking it in long thirsty gulps. I made no attempt to buy food, for I was past hunger and felt very sick. Understanding that we were only to spend a few minutes at Tel Afer I went in search of the "theatro" to hurry them up, knowing their love of wayside dalliance. They greeted me with the information that they had important business to transact in the village, and that as our cars were under orders to travel together we should not be able to start till five in the evening. For once, even Jacoub did not support me, pleading some functional derangement of the car. I knew the whole thing to be a tissue of lies to suit their social proclivities, and summoning every scrap of coherence and energy left in a world that swayed and danced round me, I ordered a prompt departure. I ordered it with every shade of persuasion and authority that I could think of, but was met with the blank wall of obstinacy that only those who have known what Arabs can be like when they do not want to do something, can understand. Everyone was most charming and respectful to me, but they did not intend to start till five o'clock. I felt the tears of weakness coming to my eyes, and that I was in danger of making an ineffectual fool of myself, so left them and sat down behind a bit of masonry to recover myself. My head ached as I never knew before that anything could ache, and felt ridiculously light and funny, my eyes refusing to focus on anything, and I hoped I was not going to have sunstroke. I cried a little to myself, not because I wanted to, but because I couldn't help myself, then I was quietly sick twice. Then I pulled myself together and going back to the car, unstrapped my kitbag, swallowed five aspirins, and half the contents of my brandy flask. Then I went back to the "theatro" and re-asserted myself. I do not quite know

how, but in a quarter of an hour the thing was done, and we had packed ourselves into the two cars. Just as we were starting a car drove in from the Mosul road, and a British officer in uniform alighted, apparently come over for an inspection of some native troops. On catching sight of me he came up and, evidently agog with a curiosity which he was too well mannered openly to gratify, commented after the British manner on the warmth of the day ! By that time the world was beginning to race round again, and as I answered him and gave a few explanations concerning my presence there, I hoped my voice sounded normal and that the tears that were again oozing uncontrollably would not trickle below the edge of my black goggles.

I do not remember a single detail of the remaining three hours' run to Mosul. The world was just one kaleidoscopic whirling confusion of heat and pain, and faint sickness. The first impression of a place that one has travelled far and painfully to reach, is usually rather a memorable and poignant thing, but that impression of Mosul is for ever lost to me. All I can dimly remember is a long conglomerated line of mud-coloured buildings and a belt of greenery dancing against a haze of sun-glare and sand and cruelly blue sky.

CHAPTER II

MOSUL

My hopes of an inconspicuous entry into Mosul were disappointed. My intention had been to dig myself quietly in at the native hotel, to eat, to sleep, and recuperate, to spy out the land, to make reconnaissances and plans before making my presence known to the authorities. Like the dog that has been rabbiting that I resembled, I was conscious of the earth on my nose in being in Iraq at all without permission and not for another twelve hours at least should I feel fitted to face a world that might speak crossly to me ! But despite my protests, we were swept off to the Police Station to deposit our passports, where I was discovered, dislodged, and, hurriedly swallowing six cups of black coffee and some more aspirins, dispatched to dignified and comfortable accommodation with a leading British official.

Only one night did I spend in Mosul, and one night on my return journey. Like many other places that figure largely in the world's history, and like many people, it is not, though large, impressive in its externals. Its modern aspect cannot have altered much if at all since the last century when a famous British explorer described it as "the worst built and least interesting" of the cities he had yet seen in the East. One or two rambling ill-paved, grandiloquently named streets with shops catering for the needs of Europeans, an old protecting crumbling mud-wall with simple gateways, a labyrinth of tiny tortuous streets, a big dirty market-place, a few mosques, tombs, and a Catholic cathedral of no particular interest, jumbled together anyhow, this is about all that remains of Mosul to-day. The principal mosque built on the

site of the old cathedral of St. Paul, and that has crumbled past all recognition of its old magnificence, has a curious tower that leans at an even sharper angle than the famous tower of Pisa. The Faithful believe that the tower, originally straight, bowed in homage at the visit of the prophet Mohammed. Somewhere in the town is supposed to lie the tomb of Seth, the son of Adam.

Mosul, "Mother and Queen of Cities," probably dates to the period of the ancient Assyrians, but was kept in the shade, so to speak, by her greater sister, Nineveh, on the opposite bank of the Tigris, though under the Mohammedan domination she was the seat of residence of the Bagdad Caliphs. It was Imad al-din Zengi who, in the twelfth century, raised her to be capital of a mighty State reaching as far as Syria, and his work was carried on by his son, Saif al-din, "Sword of the Faith." Her strength was so great that even Saladin besieged her many times in vain, and for a brief period Mosul was a seat of culture and a storehouse of wonderful art treasures. Later she fell to the Mongols, and later still to the Persians. In those days the strategic position of Mosul was of the highest importance, and also her commercial position, lying, as she does, midway between east and west. The Suez Canal of recent years has deflected much of her trade, which, however, she has a good hope of regaining by the near prospect of a railway and the general construction and opening up of roads.

Back to the town between banks covered for a few short miles with pleasant shady gardens, flows the River Tigris, and on the opposite shore stands the great mound that once was Nineveh, one of the two greatest cities of the ancient world. It is a curious fact that the Bible, though it talks at length of her sister city, Babylon, gives but few particulars of Nineveh, beyond referring to it as "an exceedingly great city of three days' journey" accompanied by a

denunciation of her wickedness. One of her most reliable historians is Ctesias, a physician of Snidos, according to whose chronicling Nineveh, at some period so remote as to be unknown, was built by Asshur, the first king of Assyria that country of vague outlines, whose boundaries no two historians have agreed upon. Authentic Assyrian history starts again somewhere about 2000 B.C. with King Ninus, who was distinguished no less through his martial conquests than by the fact that he became the husband of the renowned Semiramis, wonderful legendary queen, whose birth is ascribed to a love affair between a Greek goddess and a humble pilgrim who worshipped at her shrine. Semiramis was destined for greatness by her beauty and her brains. The gossip of the day had it that, before marrying Ninus, she drove her first husband, a Syrian general, to suicide through jealousy, and that her first act on attaining her new rank was, by ruse, to put Ninus himself to death. Mesopotamia, Media, Libya, Ethiopia, all these she gathered under sway, and her last campaign was an unsuccessful attempt to annex a part of India. She evaded the attempt of her own son, Ninyus, to assassinate her, and was reputed to have flown from an ungrateful earth to Heaven, in the form of a dove. From her unworthy offspring, who spent his life in sloth and debauchery, and thereby weakened the strength of his kingdom, up sprang an infinitely long line of kings, till as late as a few hundred years B.C. under Sardanapalus the Second, whose wickedness seems to have out-rivalled that of Ninyus himself, Nineveh fell to Arbaces the warrior, and Belesis the astrologer, and, later, to Cyaxares the Mede. In the story of this first capture the River Tigris played its part, for Sardanapalus, trusting to the saying of an oracle to the effect that Nineveh would never fall until the river had turned in enmity against her wickedness, continued his life of evil even while the enemy was battering at the city walls. At the end of two years

the Tigris, swollen by heavy floods, overflowed its banks and swept away several miles of the fortifications, whereupon Sardanapalus resolving to die surrounded by his boon companions, shut himself and his eunuchs and his concubines and all the treasures of the city that he could collect into a small chamber surrounded by an immense pyre of wood, which, being set alight, consumed them utterly.

From that time forward the greatness of Nineveh declined, and with it the whole of the mighty Assyrian Empire, that tree so fair "that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him," as Ezekiel in his superb allegory in the thirty-third chapter has described it. "Upon his ruin shall the fowls of the heavens remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches." That phrase lingers in one's mind as one looks upon the little raggle-taggle of dingy buildings set in relief by one solitary modern house of blue and white faience, the property of a rich merchant of Bagdad, that huddle, leprous, on the two great mounds of Kuyon and Nebi Yunus that once was the glory of Nineveh. In the two thousand years or more that have intervened, other towns have risen and fallen under the dominations of the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, but the site of Nineveh, the beautiful wanton, looms like a spot accursed above the sluggish waters of the Tigris, that crawls heavily past between flat banks.

As far back as the Middle Ages, the curiosity of Europe began to centre on the countries watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates. One of the earliest explorers was the Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela in Navarre, who, quite early in the seventeenth century, travelled across France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Palestine and the Syrian deserts to Mosul, a considerable undertaking in those days of unorganized and dangerous travel.

"This city situated on the confines of Persia is of great extent and very ancient ; it stands on the

banks of the Tigris and is joined by a bridge to Nineveh. Although the latter lies in ruins, there are numerous inhabited villages and small towns on its site. Nineveh is on the Tigris, distance one parasang from the town of Arbil."

These words, written by Benjamin in his journal, gave the first intelligent account of the long-lost city of Nineveh to the civilized world.

The first serious excavation of Nineveh was undertaken by James Rich, of Bristol, an employee in the East India Company, who, in 1820, collected from the natives living on the site of Nineveh tablets covered with cuneiform writing, which, however, did not leave anyone much the wiser at the time since none could translate them. Thirty years later the work of excavation was begun in earnest, first by Paul Emil Botta, French Vice-Consul at Basourah, who collected and sent to the Louvre in Paris the first comprehensive collection of Assyrian monuments; and, secondly, and about the same period, by Austin Henry Layard, who, passing Mosul and Nineveh by chance on his way to Ceylon, wrote as he gazed on the two great mounds: "Desolation is heaped on desolation, a feeling of awe succeeds to wonder, for there is nothing to relieve the mind, to lead to hope, or to tell of what has gone by. These huge mounds of Assyria made a deeper impression on me, gave rise to more serious thought and earnest reflection than the temples of Baalbec or the theatres of Ionia." It was not till between 1850 and 1860 that the old Babylonio-Assyrian cuneiform writing in its classical form, as found inscribed on marble and metal and cylinders and tablets of baked clay, had been sufficiently studied to make accurate and reliable translations. This wedge-shaped cuneiform writing has been described as a "wilderness of short lines running in every conceivable direction." The wedges usually arranged in columns running horizontally, singly or in groups, represent ideas complete in themselves or "ideo-

grams," or else syllables. In the earlier documents the "hierarchic" or picture writing was employed, and in time gave place to the "denotic" in use in the bulk of Babylonio-Assyrian literature.

To return to the present, the European element of Mosul strikes a note quite different to any other town I had yet seen. The brisk imperious militarism of our attitude towards the natives, the great gulf fixed between white and brown, and the Indian soldiers with their snow-white turbans, give one momentarily the impression that one is in the Far instead of the Near East. This impression is intensified by all sorts of little things, the Indian currency that one uses, the modes of salutation and the deference of one's servants, the things one eats and drinks. Entirely gone is the *laissez aller* and happy-go-lucky attitude of the Near East. One feels rather like a child back at school again, not a separate entity, but a very small cog in a big official machine. Besides the local soldiery and the gigantic Air Force, an Indian regiment is quartered at Mosul, and most of the servants and shopkeepers are Hindus, smooth, neat, well-mannered people, who have assimilated the iron heel of the white in the nape of their necks as the Arabs will never do. On the evening before my departure I put in a brief appearance at a sports gymkhana held by the officers on the polo ground outside the town, and for a moment believed myself back at Colombo or Bombay. The white female element is represented by two Englishwomen and two or three European women of different nationalities.

And under all the dignified, well-ordered life, one is conscious of a sub-current of strain and tension. For Mosul is a problem of perplexity. We do not want it, but the Turks do very badly. Unimpressive little frontier outpost as it is in externals, it and its barren neighbourhood are just so much tow waiting for a lighted match to fall; a match that might light the conflagration of a more than political war, a religious war between East and West, between the great

Moslem world and Christianity, and cost the universe a deal of good life and money. It is rather an optimistic idea that we and other European nations hold or pretend to hold, concerning our capabilities of training and assisting these little countries to stand alone, and perhaps more than especially weakly optimistic in the case of Iraq. The feeling among the few broad-minded Turks with whom I discussed the situation seemed to be quite definitely, though regretfully, that a decision on our part to hang on in Iraq for the term of twenty years as suggested in the original Treaty of 1922, which actually means indefinitely and for ever, barring military defeat, would force a new Turco-British war.

In Mosul itself no one talks of local politics, but one feels that they think of little else, that everyone is wondering what is going to happen next, that the future of the country and its white inhabitants are hanging in the balance. The speculations and theories concerning the position or future fate of Iraq that freely circulate on the western side of the desert, in Aleppo, in Beyrout, and Damascus, are not indulged in in Mosul, where the traditional British impassivity and reserve are exhibited to their fullest extent. When I was there the "hush-hush" atmosphere almost got on one's nerves. The little happenings, the little tribal wars and rumours of wars that took place in the Vilayet were not discussed among strangers, and one was frowned upon if one asked intelligent questions! One piece of bad luck I had at Mosul, though I think the authorities felt that my bad luck was their gain, in that it clipped my wings even a little more! I had planned a trip to the Djebel Sinjar, one of the chief and most picturesque strongholds of the Yezidi. A few hours before my departure was due, a scrap broke out there between tribes that never in the history of the British Occupation had been known to disagree. Aeroplanes carrying bombs were rushed out, officials, all hot and

bothered, dashed off in the middle of their dinner, and to my regret, my car was kindly but firmly commandeered. I never heard how that scrap finished, for before it had got properly into its stride the bonnet of my Ford was turned towards home. It was rather like being at a party where a bomb may go off at any moment. After the happy-go-lucky atmosphere of the French Colonies, where I have mostly travelled, the immense dignity and pomp of the place seemed almost oppressive. For the first time in my life I went about with the slogan of "British prestige" hung round my neck like the albatross of the Ancient Mariner.

For the earth on my nose was even more heavily clotted than I had imagined when I light-heartedly set off from Aleppo. I was received with the invariable courtesy and kindness of the British race to travellers all over the world, but the disapproval that everyone felt fairly stuck out in lumps! Which is entirely understandable, for our race takes its responsibility to its kind far more heavily than do the Latin races, who if a compatriot chooses to make himself a funeral in some outlandish place, consider it to be entirely his own funeral.

Northern Iraq is by no means a health resort or a rest-cure. It is as yet of necessity, largely unpoliced, and teems with wars and rumours of wars, tiny wars, not worth space in the papers, but tiresome ones nevertheless, that small events might fan into bigger wars, and the situation in general requires the most careful nursing. It was more by luck than skill that I hadn't got myself into some uncomfortable and undignified mess in roaming the desert unescorted and unprotected, and with less luck, might have cost my compatriots quite a lot of trouble and money.

However, all's well that ends well, and after an all too short night's rest, some food and a Heaven-sent bath, I started off next day for the country of the Devil Worshipers.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVIL WORSHIPPERS

I WAS not lucky in the moment I had chosen to visit the Devil Worshippers. The country all round was in a state of guerilla warfare between the Turks and the Kurds ; it always is, but at this period was rather more than usually so. Besides the Djebel Sinjar there was scrapping going on round the valley of Sheikh Adi, the Holy of Holies of the Yezidi, and although I personally had no particular objection to seeing a Turco-Kurdish war, the authorities at Mosul had expressed themselves very strongly on the subject. As I have said before, the situation in these parts, which the Boundary Commission from Bagdad had done less than nothing to alleviate, was too ticklish to be monkeyed with by inquisitive outsiders like myself, so I was obliged to content myself with a study of the Yezidi plain dwellers in Bashika, their principal stronghold outside the war zone.

A rough road runs out to the foot of the Kurdish mountains, over which for a couple of hours I bounced in a Ford car—not my own, for that, poor thing, was in need of a thorough overhaul to fit her for the return journey—through country that Xenophon described, very many years ago, as : “ A plain throughout, as even as the sea and full of wormwood ; of any kind of reeds or shrubs growing there, they all had an aromatic smell.” As for the smell I must take his word for it, for I never noticed it.

Till quite recent years a great deal of mystery has hung about the Yezidi, or Devil Worshippers of Kurdistan, and even to-day comparatively little is known of the inner secrets of their religion, for friendly enough to Christians, they have always lived on bad terms with their Mohammedan neighbours,



A DEVIL WORSHIPPER.



A YEZIDI WOMAN.

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and have till quite lately kept themselves religiously to themselves. They may claim themselves to be almost unique in their beliefs, for, as far as is known, there is only one other sect in the world—and that sect is probably related to them by some degree of remote blood-tie—that offers open allegiance to the Evil One. I say “open” with intention, for, flippantly speaking, it seems to me that there are plenty of people in the world, in our midst even, who, if they don’t actually worship, at any rate have adopted the Devil as their tutelary genius though without being as frank about it as the Yezidi !

The other sect I refer to is that of the Cherag Kush, or “Extinguishers of Light” of Seistan, an eastern province of Persia, though the legend accounting for their origin differs entirely from that of the Yezidi. According to the Cherag Kush there existed, many hundreds of years ago, a Prophet, son of one Hanlalah, a miracle maker. This young Prophet was tempted by Satan, who, disguising himself as a mulberry tree, enjoined him to bow down and worship him. Enraged by the wavering of his disciples who had been over-impressed by the miracle, the Prophet started to hew down the mulberry tree, but the Devil, turning back into human form, challenged him to wrestle for supremacy. The Prophet won the fight, and, to save his skin, the Devil promised him large sums of money, payable under the mulberry tree, every week. The Prophet, overcome by cupidity, accepted, but when next week he went to the mulberry tree to claim the money the Devil again challenged him to wrestle, and to double the stake if he was vanquished. This time the Devil won and the young Prophet died. By this time the people were convinced of the superior might of the Powers of Darkness and thereafter worshipped them.

There are various legends relating the Yezidis to the Ansyri of Syria, of whom a few units still linger near Aleppo. Their Arab neighbours call them

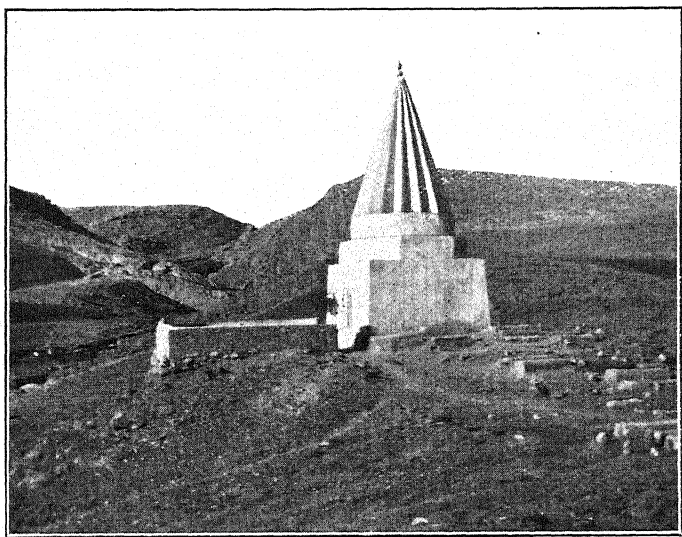
Cheragh Sonder, which also means "Light Extinguishers," and old stories, probably unfounded on fact, tell how their creed was introduced by Queen Semiramis and was accompanied by orgies of debauchery, which latter certainly do not appear to exist. Both the Mohammedans and the Christians trace their name to the celebrated Caliph Yezid whose follower, Shummar, put Hassan the son of Ali to death. They say themselves that they come from Basra. At one time they were a very powerful race but they were subjected to great persecution by their Mohammedan neighbours because they were not, it was then said, "Masters of a Book," like the Christians (the Bible), the Mohammedans (the Koran) and the Jews (the Talmud). In return they avenged themselves freely, and were the terror of that country. Later they were invaded, in the Sinjar, by the Turks under Mohomet Reshid and Hafiz Pachas, were in time subdued and became resigned to their lot. Nowadays, since the country round became opened up and they themselves caught in the tide of enlightenment and civilization, they have lost their old wildness and much of their mistrust. The exigencies of trade oblige them to live in, at any rate, external amity with their Jew and Mohammedan neighbours. The Yezidi of these parts prefer to call themselves Dassinis, and the term "Yezidi" is applied to them by the Mohammedans as a reproach.

It was about four in the afternoon when we reached Bashika ; a low lying, irregular mass of squat square houses all of one colour with the ground, standing in the middle of a great plain, very slightly undulating and infinitely lonely. Behind the town on low mounds stood small white domes very much like the Arab *Khoubas*, surmounted by curious conical fluted spires, characteristic, as I learnt later, of Yezidi architecture. Still further behind, on the horizon, rose the foot-hills of the Kurdish mountains.

Living in amity with Christians, as do the



THE YEZIDI TEMPLE AT BASHIKA ; HIGH PRIEST OF
DEVIL WORSHIPPERS ON LEFT.



A YEZIDI TOMB, BASHIKA.

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Yezidi, there is a fair sprinkling of native Catholics in Bashika, fairly well-to-do folk, and it was in their *diwan* that I was quartered, a large stone room lined with a wooden divan where they held their councils and received their rare visitors. Here I was most graciously received by the leading man of the village, a rich man as that part of the world goes, a Kurd, and by the Catholic priest, a Syrian native, a dear old man, very old, dressed in black robes, who made me understand that it gave him great pleasure to hear me talk, but that I must excuse him for not answering at length as he had no teeth !

After the inevitable tea and sweetmeats I was taken to visit the headman of the Yezidis, and conducted on a tour of inspection round Bashika, finishing up with another tea-party at the *diwan* of the chief himself.

The house of the latter is the only building of any pretensions in Bashika. We entered through an archway into a large courtyard through which ran a narrow stream of ice-cold mountain water. In the shadow of big plastered pillars we sat in a ring, I and my English interpreter, the Chief, and a dozen or more of the leading Devil Worshipers. The Chief sat opposite me, and about every five minutes the man at the far end of the circle used to come and sit opposite him and then beside me, making place in due turn for the next : a polite custom by which every guest, from the highest to the lowest, has his turn in the place of honour. Most of them sucked at great curved pipes, that of the Chief being really handsome, with a long stem of dark amber. Sometimes he would give it to one of the guests for a few puffs, a mark of friendship that I was not sorry to be spared, preferring a chain of my own cigarettes during the consumption of innumerable tiny cups of tea, after the Arab fashion ! Conversation hung fire rather, having to be interpreted, dealing mainly with the usual compliments and inquiries, the state of the crops and a little local gossip.

The original language of the Yezidi was a Kurdish dialect, but nowadays those of the plains all speak Arabic, though an Arabic quite different from any of the African dialects, with some of which I am more or less conversant, or even with the Arabic of Syria. All the men round me, including the Chief, were singularly good-looking, with bronzed open faces and honest eyes, less Semitic, blunter featured than the Arabs. Though plain dwellers they had the air and build of mountaineers. Their manners were dignified and quiet, but they looked as if they could fight ; the sort of men one would like to have in a tight corner ! For the most part they were dressed in white garments not unlike the Arab *gandourah*, and all of them wore red turbans, except the Chief, whose turban was black, a sign of distinction. All the Yezidi, even the poorest of them, wore red turbans or sometimes a red shift, or at all events a bit of red about them somewhere, for red—the colour of Lucifer—is sacred to them, and black runs it a close second. Unlike the Christians and Mohammedans of those and many other parts who wear blue to avert the Evil Eye, blue is anathema to the Yezidi, as to the Sabaeans, and never to be seen in their houses or their clothing. Their food, as I learnt later, is composed of much the same floury compounds as among the Arabs, but they all drink wine when they can get it, and some excellent *raki* (a taste acquired from their old Turkish conquerors) was provided to wash down the supper of my own provisions that I and my escort ate later in the *diwan*.

My sleep in that *diwan* was not too bad, though the mattresses were hard and not innocent of fleas, but dressing and undressing were not altogether easy matters if one had any feelings about privacy—of which much travelling in Eastern countries has long since rid me—owing to the passionate interest with which most of the female population of Bashika used to gaze at me through the wide unshuttered windows !

I spent my brief sojourn at Bashika mainly in interminable walks round the town and environs, and in talking to everyone and anyone I could make understand me. They were all perfectly charming to me and anxious to tell me everything I wanted to know, except of course on the forbidden subject of their religion, though the Catholics were willing to tell me everything they knew on that subject also, which wasn't very detailed or definite.

I was even shown round their Temple by the High Priest himself—a patriarchal and really beautiful old man with a long beard, dressed in snowy-white flowing garments and turban. It stood on a slight elevation, and silhouetted with a really wonderful effect against a fiery sunset that dyed the white walls as red as the sacred colour itself. Through some arches at the end of the small square courtyard was the shrine, surmounted by some hierarchic-looking inscriptions, empty except for a low altar, at which I gazed with suppressed longing and curiosity, for behind it was kept the clay replica of the Sacred Peacock, emblem of the Devil. Even, I am ashamed to say, I would have betrayed my hosts' trust, I would have taken any risk—and that risk would not have been small—to have had a glimpse of that Peacock, surely the most curious satanic emblem in the world ; but the outer door of the Temple was kept hermetically locked night and day, and the walls were high and without foothold, and alas, I am no cat-burglar ! Over the dome tapered, as on the tombs I had seen already, and on every sacred building of the Yezidi, the curious conical fluted spire, characteristically and noticeably beautiful in design and proportion, though simple in comparison with the usual rough and ready Yezidi architecture, and whose origin none knows or can account for.

At the far end of the town, each on a rocky slope, stand the shrines of Yezidi saints, rather beautiful little objects in their way. One of them, contrary to the custom of the country, was erected in honour of a

woman, one Ziti Habibi, or Ziti the Beloved; in her time a great and holy woman, whose zeal and acumen wrought much good to her people and gave her the rare honour of sainthood. The day of my arrival, April the 16th, was the Yezidi New Year, and over the doors of the Temple and of all the little shrines, stuck on with wet mud, was a bunch of tiny red flowers whose name I have forgotten, that grows in the surrounding plain, and is deemed sacred and the flower emblematic to New Year's day.

A long rough walk took one further still up a rocky hill where bubbles mysteriously from the hard bed of a deep cavern a clear spring that, lower down, gathers itself into a kind of natural reservoir in whose translucent waters one can see a quantity of small fish. I was about to ask the name of these fish when my interpreter put his finger to his lips! Fish, as he told me when our Yezidi friends were for the moment out of hearing, are one of the many things mention of which is forbidden among the Yezidi. Fish are taboo, for fish live in water and in the water lives always the Devil! There had, it appeared, been a great scandal in Bashika just before my arrival, for an Unbeliever on visit from Bagdad had actually been caught with improvised line and hook, fishing in the Devil's own spring! The last seen of that Unbeliever, I believe, was a fat form sprinting across the desert for his life, followed by a shower of stones and the execrations of *tout*—Bashika!

I paid calls on a few of the Yezidi women, but, as usual with the women of the East, without much practical profit. Though they do not veil like their Arab neighbours and are treated with a good deal more consideration by their menfolk, their minds, I found, were the minds of children. In the minds of all men, however primitive, there is a curiosity, a desire to hear stories, even though they may appear to them fairy stories, of things outside their knowledge. They like, in their limited way, to compare, to under-

stand. The primitive woman has no such curiosity, except on small purely personal matters. A white woman, or a strange one, merely mildly excites her curiosity on matters of toilet or domestic life ; why her skin is white or her hair curly, whether and how she makes up her face, whether she has husbands or children, and how many of each, whether her husband loves her or beats her : which is natural enough, for the female is of the species, is more practical than the male and does not waste her time registering things that do not concern her. And nothing apart from the routine of domestic drudgery, except the aforesaid items, does concern the untutored daughter of Nature.

In Bashika I had to go through the normal catechism of Eve, and was, as usual, little comprehended or esteemed. They are nice gentle creatures, the Yezidi women, and good-looking in their youth, slight featured and well proportioned. They too dress in dingy white with dashes of red, except a few of the richer and more worldly-minded who, for "best," affect combinations of brilliant colouring as do the women of Mosul. The interiors of their houses differ little from those of the Arabs, being even barer and perhaps a shade cleaner. Polygamy, to the extent of four wives, is permitted but rarely taken advantage of, for they are not a rich people, and wives, as they do the world over, cost good money. As far as I could discover there is no actual wedding ceremony, merely a declaration of mutual consent before the priest, followed by merry-making and drinking and dancing. There is nothing of the sinuous East in their mode of dancing ; it is the sturdy dancing of mountain folk, an energetic rhythmic stamping in mass formation, men and women together.

The Yezidi are affectionate and tender parents. To the famous Layard, I believe, whose visit to the house of a Yezidi happened to coincide with the birth of a son and heir, fell the unique distinction of becom-

ing godfather to a Devil Worshipping baby, a distinction that, as he himself admitted, gave him a twinge of uneasiness !

Divorce, as in Moslem, is easily obtained by the man, but is virtually impossible for the woman, but the standard of morality is exceptionally high for an Eastern race and—quite unlike Moslem—as high and as rigidly enforced for men as for women. Death is the penalty for marital infidelity on either side, and even in these days of enlightenment—or laxity according to individual view-point—is still occasionally carried out. A European on visit to Bashika not so many years ago told me that it was once whispered in his hearing that a married Yezidi had been caught out in an intrigue with his neighbour's daughter, a widow, and that the woman on discovery had fled at night across the desert to a distant Christian village where she had friends who would protect her. The Yezidi would not speak to my informant of the affair, so bitterly were they ashamed, but that night he was awakened from sleep by loud heart-rending shrieks as of someone in terrible pain. Later on he learnt that it was the near relations of the guilty man—two brothers and a cousin to be exact—who had discovered his sin. Apparently among the Yezidi there is none of the "honour among thieves" spirit of white men, who will always stand by each other—whatever they may do for the unfortunate woman or women concerned—in any kind of sin or crime, for these three gathered together their friends, seized the wretched man as he was on the point of escaping to join his inamorata in her refuge and, tying him up in a public place, proceeded to stone him to death.

In a place where one had to walk with infinite wariness in matters touching religion, and where all one's information came in bits and pieces, often contradictory, it is hard to make an authentic and connected recapitulation of the curious Yezidi religion. Roughly speaking, and, as far as I could ascertain,

it seems to be a compound of many others, mainly Christian with a dash of Jew and Mohammedan, and with assimilated fragments of the doctrines of the Sabaeans and the Manicheans. They practise, it is said, a kind of baptism and also circumcision, and show considerable respect for Christian priests and churches. They worship one supreme God, Yazdan (a corruption of the Persian Ahuramazda), but offer no direct prayer or sacrifice to him. They resent any direct mention of his name, though from force of association with the Mohammedans they occasionally use it in the form of an ejaculation. Jesus Christ, whom they call Melek Isa, according to them was a great angel who took the form of a man and whose earthly body did not die on the cross but ascended straight to Heaven. They believe in his second coming. They believe, too, in the archangels (with Satan at their head), Gabriel, Machiel, Raphael, Azrael, and Shemkiel. They hold the Old Testament in reverence and believe in the cosmogony of Genesis. They respect in a minor degree also the New Testament and the Koran. Moses and Mohammed they consider as prophets of equal rank.

And here their approximation to Christianity about ends, and their adherence to the Devil begins.

Shaitan (Arabic for accursed) they revere and conciliate because they say that Jazdan, or God, is kind and merciful, is impotent to do much good and will anyway do no harm, but that Shaitan is fierce and jealous and quick to anger and will revenge insults or slights offered to him. The genesis of their faith, rather reminiscent of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is that in the beginning the seven archangels began to create the world and all that is in it, but could not agree over the fashioning of the snake. In the quarrel that ensued he was cast by them from Heaven to earth, where, having finished the snake to his own satisfaction, still in a state of baffled rage he created the Yezidi religion. His reign on earth lasts ten

thousand years, of which there are four thousand yet to run, at the end of which time he will be restored to the hierarchy of Heaven, when the reign of evil will be at an end and Melek Isa, or Christ, will rule for another ten thousand years. In view of possible favours to come it is advisable to pacify and please him, the Devil; therefore at their great yearly festival the Yezidi offer up one sheep to Melek Isa, but seven to the Devil. The name of the Evil One must never be mentioned, or any word that sounds like it or like the word *Maloun*, which also means accursed. I found it hard sometimes during my visit to remember this, and to remember when it was necessary sometimes to use an everyday word like "Shemsh" (the sun) which has the same hard "sh" sound as in Shaitan, to soften it so that there could be no misunderstanding. A young Englishman who has visited the Yezidi and speaks Arabic fluently told me that once through sheer absent-mindedness he quoted the old eastern saw which being translated runs: "A man who marries ties a millstone round his neck and throws himself into the sea," which contains in the original actually three forbidden words and sounds. He was seized with a momentary panic as he saw black looks and heard muttered curses throughout the gathering, but the headman of the village, an enlightened man and a personal friend of his, with ready tact saved the situation. "It is unfortunate," he said blandly, "that our esteemed friend does not speak our language!" In the old days the penalty for infringing this law was death.

When they must refer to their infernal deity they do so reverently under the appellation of Melek Taous, "Emperor Peacock" or Melek el Kout, "The Mighty Angel." They have a metal image of a bird, vaguely resembling a peacock—a symbol, not an idol—in their chief sanctuary at Sheikh Adi, upon which no man of other than their faith has ever

set eyes, and a clay replica of it, jealously guarded, is kept in their more important temples.

The legend from which originated the sacredness of the peacock is a curious one, and has given rise to another prohibition. In fact the Yezidi faith is full of prohibitions of all sorts that make embarrassing pitfalls for the unwary stranger ! The Devil, they say, after his first sin in the Garden of Eden, was hiding from the wrath of God disguised in the form of a peacock. Hearing the voice of God calling him he looked for somewhere to hide. The only cover available was a large bed of lettuces, so he hid himself therein, bidding the lettuces to cover him with their broad leaves. They did their best to obey, but could not conceal the magnitude or the sheen of the tail of which he was so proud, and he was discovered by God and punished for his great sin. In his rage he laid on the humble lettuces a curse and no follower of his may mention their name, or eat them. Several other vegetables also, for what reason I do not know, are forbidden as subjects of conversation or as articles of diet.

The images of Melek Taous all bear the inscription : " Blessings go where you go, he that kisses you kisses me, he that gives to you gives to me," words supposed to have been uttered by Melek Taous himself. If a Yezidi wishes to make a binding oath a circle is drawn in the dust and all the ground within that circle is declared to be the property of Melek Taous, so that the man who stands within it will undergo everlasting damnation if he does not speak the truth. If a Yezidi comes up before an Arab court much the same procedure is followed. In this case two circles are drawn and the form of the oath is : " I pass from Yezidi truth to Mohammedan truth." The oath is always kept, and in the old days any breach of it was punished with instant death.

Touching the emblem of the sacred Peacock, one of the replicas of it is bought every year by auction by the head of some leading religious family, and taken

the round of the district, visiting all the farms, to collect tithes of the crops. Anything collected over and above the original sum paid for it is kept by the buyer. I only discovered one instance of the emblem, or rather replica, ever having been in the hands of anyone of an alien creed. This was a very charming missionary lady, who now lives in Transjordan, who very many years ago, while travelling in Kurdistan, was visited at dead of night by a young Yezidi chief flying through the mountains from the revenge of a rival to some accession of chieftainship. Though the penalty was instant death if the emblem was discovered in her possession, she gave it sanctuary for nearly two days, till it could safely be returned to the proper hands. I have heard of another case, whether authenticated or not I do not know, of two young English officers who more recently held it in their hands under much the same conditions. A temporary legacy of interest but much danger!

As I have said, in the old days the Yezidi were the subject of every kind of persecution from their Mohammedan neighbours, and it must be said that in return they gave as good as they got. In those days no Mohammedan would pass a Yezidi's house at night, and even to-day when he does so he will spit on the ground and invoke the name of Allah. The reason for this mistrust was because they were reputed to have no holy book. But during the last century it has been ascertained that they have a book, jealously concealed and guarded, called *Kitab el Aswad*, "The Black Book," dating from the tenth century, which is reputed to be rather like the Koran and is kept in the sanctuary at Sheikh Adi. Until quite recently it has always been considered a sin to be able to read or write, except among one or two religious families, and the penalty for anyone who admitted that he could do either was death. What a mercy it would be if we could pass such a law at home! What a release from the thousands of

indifferent books that flood the market, and what a rest-cure for we poor overworked and underpaid creatures who write them ! But the Yezidi, though they have not reached the Circulating Library stage yet, are beginning to assimilate the advantages of literature, and Hamo Shero, the great chief of the Djebel Sinjar, a singularly able and comparatively enlightened man, has begun to encourage education not only for boys but for girls.

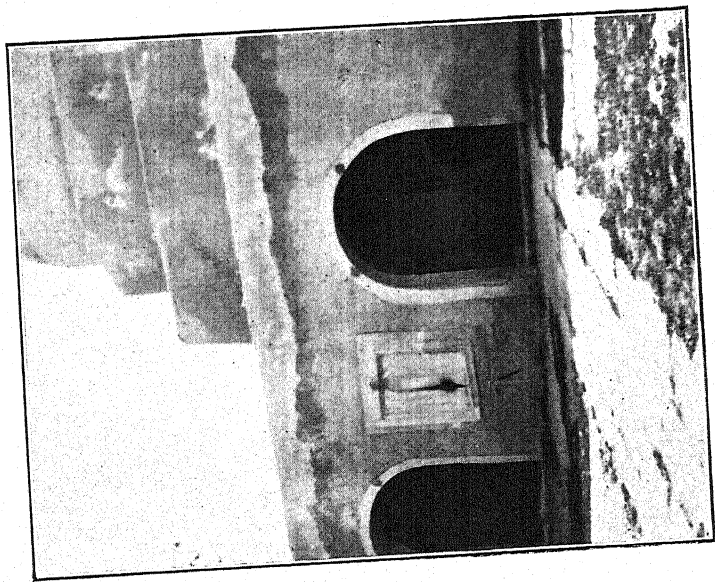
In spite of age-old persecution and harrying, scarcely any Yezidi has ever been known to deny his faith. His daily prayer is : " O Melek Taous, thou hast created me a Yezidi, keep me ever faithful to thy religion." In the days of the Turkish supremacy hundreds of them died and suffered torture rather than recant. Some of them who were carried off into slavery were intimidated into adopting the outward form of the religion of their captors, though with a mental reservation as to its temporariness, but when later, through the changes of war, they were restored to freedom and their homes, they were killed by their own people, furious at even their outward renegadism. Isolated units of their sect are spread over a wide area, some even right up in Central Asia, and if by any chance a Yezidi for motives of prudence is obliged to keep his religion to himself, he still practises its simpler rites in secret. And yet it is but a sad religion, for during the present reign of evil they do not believe it possible for any of their number to go to Heaven unless he should do four times more good than evil while on earth.

The Yezidi are grateful folk and cherish great esteem for the Christians who have left them in peace and not mistrusted or persecuted them. They sheltered many hundreds of Greek and Armenian refugees flying from the Turks in the time of the massacres, refusing to give them up even when pressed at the point of the bayonet. On more than one occasion the Turks sent companies of troops up into the

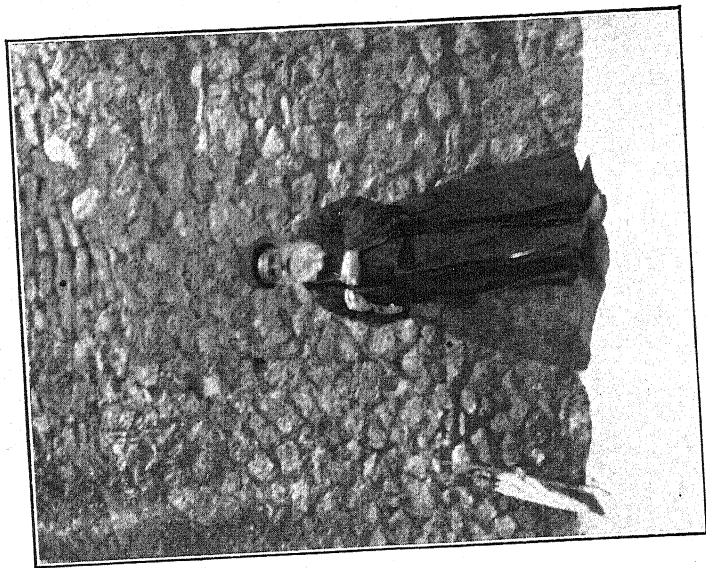
Kurdish mountains, but the Yezidi protected the unfortunate Christians at the risk of their own annihilation, and drove away their attackers.

The patron saint of the Yezidi is Sheikh Adi, whose tomb is reputed to be in a valley of the Kurdish mountain some sixty miles from Mosul, that bears his name, and which was formerly the site of a Christian church dedicated to St. Thaddeus. He is a legendary creature whose origin none knows. Some say he came from near Aleppo, where the Magian cult held out for a long time, remotely represented now by the Druses, and that he was a Druse, who, disagreeing with his own religion, drifted east and started a creed to suit himself. Others say that he lived before Mohammed, and yet others that he was one of the Merwanian Caliphs. The first theory sounds the most probable for they still retain a tinge of the old Persian cult of the sun. Though they do not actually worship the sun, they reverence it, and some of them still kiss the first object on which its rays fall each morning, and for fire, as the sun's symbol, they have nearly the same regard. They will not spit into fire, but will sometimes pass their hands quickly through it, rubbing them afterwards over their face. They have various orders of priesthood, the lower orders being hereditary. They believe in the existence of a life after death, and will never say of anyone "He is dead," but "He is changed."

It was my very great regret that for the reasons which I have mentioned I was not able to visit the sacred valley of Sheikh Adi. One of the comparatively few men to visit it has told me that the valley is high and narrow and well adapted to defence from possible attack. Inside the outer wall of the temple there are numerous empty apartments for the use of the pilgrims from afar who once a year come to do homage to their dead saint. In the shrine which is surmounted by the typical Yezidi fluted spires, stands the alleged tomb of Sheikh Adi, and on the walls are inscribed



ENTRANCE OF DEVIL WORSHIPPERS' TEMPLE.



A GREEK ORTHODOX PRIEST.

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incomprehensible cabalistic signs and a bas-relief of the snake of Melek Taous. In the Holy of Holies stands in solitary state a chest covered with red cloths which contains the sacred effigy of the Peacock. Near by is the sacred spring said to be subterraneanly connected with the Zem-Zem well at Mecca, into which it was the custom for pilgrims to throw coins of gold and silver in honour of the saint. A story has it that an unbeliever, hearing of the accumulation of treasure, entered the shrine while the daughter of the keeper was absent on her duties. The girl, when she returned, seeing a shadowy figure in the darkness, thought that a miracle had happened and went off to tell the neighbours that Sheikh Adi had shown himself to her. During her absence the thief made a get-away, his garments bulging with his ill-gotten wealth ! All that is known of the great yearly festival, to which pilgrims come sometimes from very many hundreds of miles away, is that it is accompanied by loud singing and dancing that lasts all through a night till the ecstatic participants fall exhausted to the ground. The sound of it used to ring through the silent hills for miles round, and doubtless gave rise to the unfounded rumours spread by antagonistic Mohammedans as to the saturnalias said to take place. Of the actual ceremonies or rites practised nothing is definitely known.

I received a rousing ovation and very many compliments when I finally left Bashika and half the population seemed to be gathered round my Ford as I drove off. As I have said, the Yezidi like the Christians, and unused, poor souls, to appreciation, are touched and flattered that one of our faith from time to time should come from afar, "from beyond the desert and beyond the seas" to visit them. If time had permitted I should gladly have remained longer, and it was with real regret that I left them, simple and kindly folk, Devil Worshippers, yet, broadly speaking, in many ways so much more Christian than the Christians !

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN ECHOES

ON my way back to Mosul from Bashika I made a detour to visit some of the little villages of Syrian Catholics that are dotted at rare intervals over the great plain.

Christianity made very early progress in Mesopotamia and old Assyria, and was first practised in Persia under the reign of King Artabanus. To six of the twelve Apostles was given the task of spreading the Gospel among the Chaldeans and Assyrians, to St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew, St. Matthew, St. Jude, the son of James, and St. Thaddeus. In honour of the last, as I have said, a church was erected in the valley of Sheikh Adi, and doubtless some of the ceremonies, as performed in these little Eastern churches to this day, have come right down in their original form. Even the barbarous persecutions to which the early Christians were subjected in the second century by the Emperor Trajan and others, could not kill the rapid spread of Christianity, and by the third century it was solidly established.

Of the true Christians of the Middle East, by far the greater number are of the Greek Orthodox Church, locally called Roum Ourtou-douks, which is under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch. The higher clergy in the bigger place conduct their services in the Greek language, but in the more primitive spots Arabic is employed. Before the war Russia was the predominating influence in the Greek Church both with religious and financial support.

Besides the orthodox forms of the Christian Faith there exist, especially in Iraq, a variety of offshoots,

some of them diverging so from the original creed that one can scarcely say whether they are Christians or not, and they all of them squabble quite hideously on the most abstruse and one would have said unimportant articles of belief.

One of the most important of these offshoots is the sect of the Nestorians, that started at Diarbekr, and whose origin is vague, though probably they were a Semitic or Syrio-Aryan people. Abraham came from the Chaldeans, and in the Book of Judith the Jews are spoken of as descendants of the Chaldeans. Their doctrines are especially interesting to Protestants, since they are opposed to the tenets of Rome. In the old days they did much missionary work in the East, and an old writer says that they had converts in India, Arabia, Socotra, China, and among the Bactrian Huns, Pers-Armenians and Medes. The Nestorian Church was at its height when the Arab invasions spread Mohammedanism over Asia, and it is said that Mohammed owed much of the traditions and learning of the Koran to the instructions of a Nestorian monk called Sergius. At that time most of the learning of the East was in the hands of the Nestorians, or Chaldeans, and their scribes preserved fragments of Greek learning and translated them, notably the works of Aristotle, into Arabic.

Among other Tartar converts they boasted Prester John, that curious fabulous Christian monarch who, according to the historians of many nations, ruled his legendary kingdom somewhere in Asia, round about the twelfth century, "Beyond Persia and Armenia, and was with his people a Christian but a Nestorian, and made war against the brother kings of the Medes and Persians." No one knew exactly who or what was Prester John, though there seems little doubt of his actual existence. He was known equally as "John the Patriarch of the Indians," "King of Ethiopia," "King of the Magi," etc., and he is supposed to have fought for Christianity against Mohammedans and

idolaters, over a wide area of the earth's surface. A letter purporting to come from him was supposedly received by Emperor Manuel, describing himself as "The greatest monarch under Heaven," with seventy-two minor kings as tributaries, waited on by seven kings at a time, by sixty dukes, and 365 counts. Ten thousand knights followed him, and a hundred thousand footmen, twelve archbishops sat on his right, and twenty bishops on his left. His domain reached from Babylon to the borders of Tartary, and contained all manner of men, among them the Amazons and "Those unclean nations whom Alexander Magnus walled up among the mountains of the North, and who were to come forth at the latter day," and divers monstrous beasts, and birds and fishes, including the salamander that lives in fire; and the fountain of youth, and a magic mirror by which he could see all that passed through his dominions, and every kind of magic. His sceptre was made of solid emerald, and his standards of war were of gold and precious jewels. The legends of his prowess fill a hundred manuscripts. Such a fabulous figurehead of romance could only have been given credence at an epoch when travellers' tales were accepted as unvarnished fact, and learned men did not even know the possibilities and proportions of the globe. Emperor or charlatan, mummer or fanatic, the life of Prester John reads like a wonderful glowing fairy-tale.

After the fall of the Califs the power of the Chaldeans declined. Tamerlane himself hunted, destroyed and devastated all except those who managed to flee to the most inaccessible parts of the Turkish mountains. Their doctrine acknowledges "The divisibility and separation of the two persons as well as the two natures of Christ," and they refuse the title of Mother of God to the Virgin. Their creed differs little from our Nicene Creed. The figure on the cross is regarded less as a sacred symbol than as a kind of badge, a sign of brotherhood. They deny the doctrine of trans-

substantiation and also the doctrines of purgatory, and are averse to the exhibition of images. They claim seven sacraments, but details of these are not to be ascertained. They have many fasts, and there are one hundred and fifty-two days in the year when meat may not be eaten. Their Patriarch never takes meat, and his mother must abstain from all animal food for several months before his birth. No journeying or work may be done from Saturday at sundown to sundown on Sunday. Their language is a Semitic dialect allied to Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac, and is still called Chaldee. The Protestants of America have taken a great deal of interest in the Nestorians, and have opened schools and missions in Persia, and have published Scriptures in the vernacular for these "Protestants of the East," as they are called.

Another sect is that of the Jacobites, that started a little later under a monk called Jacob. They believe that there is but one nature in Christ, and they believe also in transubstantiation, and will accept the Eucharist from Roman Catholic priests, contrary to the tenets of the Greek Church which does not acknowledge the Pope.

On the extreme border line of alleged Christianity come the Sabaeans, who are said to be descended from Saba, son of Cush, though they themselves say they are the progeny of the Arabs who were baptized in the Jordan by St. John the Baptist. For several centuries they were frankly idolaters, till they embraced a modified and decadent form of the Nestorian creed. They revere the Psalms of David, but their main religious documents are books written in now incomprehensible and unknown Chaldaic characters, which they say were originally written for them by Adam himself, also minor scriptures by Seth and Enoch. They make pilgrimage to Haran, a small town in Mesopotamia, they esteem as saints various little-known characters of the Old Testament, one of whom they say was buried in a Pyramid of Egypt, and they

revere the Temple at Mecca. Truly a queer medley ! They have suffered considerable persecution at the hands of various conquerors, to escape which they have scattered themselves over a very wide area. They have a curious custom of ensuring their dead against violation, by sealing their cerements with the emblem of a lion, a wasp, and a scorpion, surrounded by a serpent, and curious stories are told of how, in cases where evilly disposed persons came to rob the sepulchre so sealed, the animals depicted took on life, and drove back the despoilers.

Another queer, semi-Christian people are the Manichæans, whose Messiah was one Manes, who tried to combine the old creeds of the Gnostics and the Magians. He accepted our Bible story of the Garden of Eden, adding on his own sequel to the effect that to repair the harm done by the fall of man God created two beings, Christ and the Holy Ghost, and later, when Christ had fulfilled his mission on earth, himself, Manes, to carry on the Manichæan faith. Their three festivals are Easter, Pentecost, and the Martyrdom of Manes. Their creed is an aimless and sad one, enjoining privation, voluntary poverty, semi-starvation, celibacy, and abstention from every form of pleasure and gaiety.

Scarcely Christians are the Ali Ullahis, who have erroneously been confounded with the light-extinguishers of Persia, and who believe that Ali, son-in-law of Mohammed, was God himself. Little is known of them, for like the Yezidi they have always been mistrusted by the Mohammedans whom they most resemble, and keep their religious beliefs and rights jealously to themselves.

Travellers of the last century had little good to say of the various brands of Christianity of the Near and Middle East, declaring them to be dirty, idle, drunken and vicious, and forced to cringe before the Mohammedan supremacy. In the matter of teaching and example, the Church of Rome has undoubtedly taken the

lead, has firmly established her authority, and gained many converts not only among the Mohammedans and the Pagans, but also among the other Catholics, variously classed as Greek Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Orthodox Nestorian, Armenian Catholic, etc.

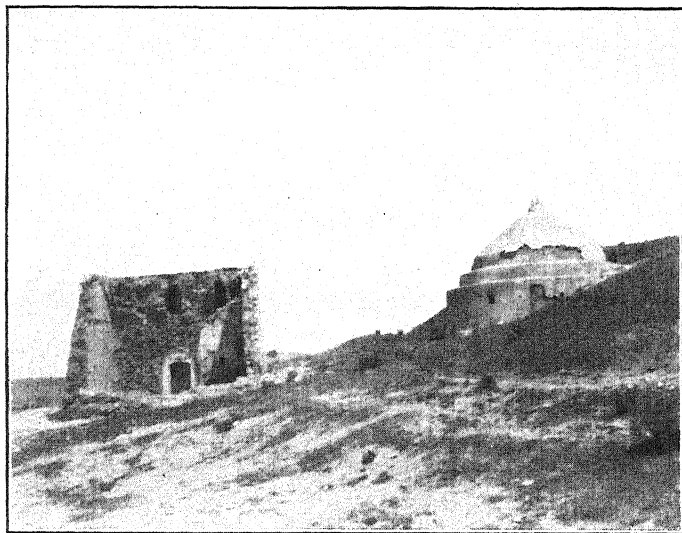
I visited four little Syrian Catholic communities on my way back to Mosul : Bartilli Karamelis, Kara Kosh, and Mar Behnan. The two latter were of no special interest in themselves, though about all of these little isolated Christian centres scattered throughout the length and breadth of a great desolate burning plain, there was something rather touching, wistfully impressive. They all bore a mutual resemblance—a few hundred poverty-stricken inhabitants, living their lonely lives in tumbledown mud dwellings, under a torrid sun in summer, and an icy wind in winter, and in their midst a cavernous old, infinitely old, church of grey broken stone, dating from seven to twelve hundred years back, generally terribly in need of repair, showing the signs of ravages from barbarian enemies. Their walls and gateways are inscribed with queer hieroglyphics, and inscriptions in ancient Syriac, and other long-forgotten tongues ; and are presided over by black-robed priests, seemingly nearly as old as the churches themselves, who explain things to one slowly and with difficulty, in halting French. Some of the priests were truly beautiful in an archaic way ; the older such as one might imagine the Patriarchs of old, the younger ones living models of faces seen on old Assyrian coins and carved in stone, with their colourless, waxen, straight-featured faces, set in relief by the high black head-dress of the Eastern Christian priests, brilliant inexpressive eyes, black as onyx, and long square crinkly black beards.

Stepping out of the brilliant sunlight into the dim, musty gloom of these little crumbling churches, one seemed to have left the twentieth century far behind, and to be moving in dim remote ages among the dead, shadowed by the spirits of legendary kings, whose

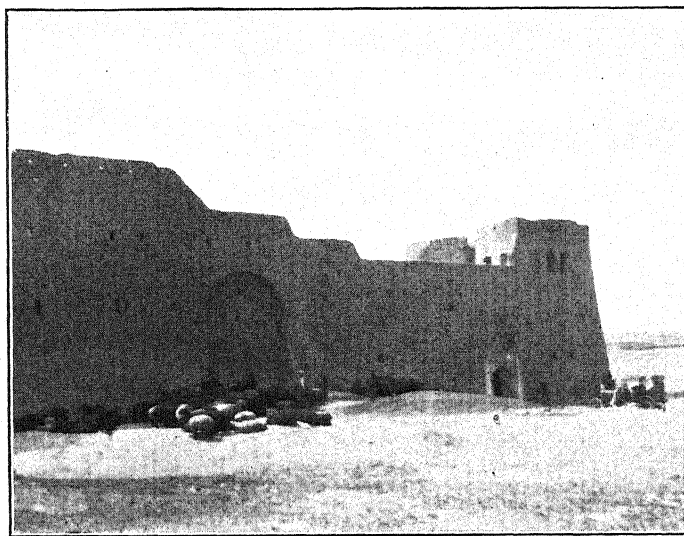
names made history and eternity. But there was one jarring note at Karamelis where I was most graciously entertained in the house of a leading townsman, a Syrian who had spent two memorable years among the British at Bagdad, and who quenched my thirst with tepid beer, and regaled my ears with Arab dance tunes, played on a wheezy gramophone, pride and joy of his life.

At Kara Kosh there was a really fine old church, whose inscriptions I longed to be able to decipher, and which is famous throughout the country on account of a shadow that appears on one of its walls, for an hour every year—the clearly-defined shadow of a woman with her children. No one who has seen it has the remotest idea how the shadow is formed, and the venerable patriarch who showed it to me frankly only half believed his own theory, as to some hazard of the sun's rays at a certain position filtering through a window on a wall at right angles to it. To please each other, we worked out and played with his theory by every conceivable method, by astronomy, and geometry, by trigonometry and Euclid, and even by common sense, but quite obviously we neither of us believed in it. Undoubtedly it is a miracle; at any rate, it has been accepted as such for many generations by countless people, probably just as intelligent as ourselves. A great ceremony is held every year, when the shadow is due to appear, and from many miles around come people, with some heart's desire to pray for, and in particular, women who long for children. Yes, certainly I prefer to believe it is a miracle. Kara Kosh once upon a time was a big important town, but some two hundred and fifty years ago the neighbourhood was swept and desolated by famine and then by plague. In spite of it, the surrounding district is now one of the richest corn countries in Iraq.

Mar Behnan, an old monastery enclosed in strong high walls built to keep off the attacks of old-time invaders, stands quite alone on a little elevation in the great



THE VAULT AT MAR BEHNAN.



MONASTERY OF MAR BEHNAN.

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plain. There is no sign of other human habitation as far as eye can carry. In it live a colony of monks, self-supporting, rearing their own goats, fowls and sheep so that the courtyard looks like a farmyard. In their refectory I made my lunch off the provisions I had brought with me, which they supplemented with *raki* and excellent coffee. Only the youngest of them, a keen-eyed intelligent young man, talked French, and where he had picked up his vocabulary I cannot imagine. It consisted largely of slang as colloquial and profane as any I have heard in the French colonial army, spoken with a precise and scholarly intonation, that as he took me round the church and reverently explained its various points of interest, filled me with a wild desire to giggle. But his whole life was bound up in the monastery, its history and its associations, and its crying need of repair. Certainly it was strangely beautiful, dark and infinitely suggestive, conjuring up to the imagination visions of the little new Christian congregations of old times, practising their belief behind armed walls, in the face of constant opposition and persecution and often of death, whose faith sprang flame-like in dark places. The darkness of all these little churches, and especially of this one, seemed in some way symbolic. Its walls were covered every inch with inscriptions and curious and really beautiful symbolic ornamentations, finely carved. All the time I was there a young girl in poor clothing knelt at the altar steps and prayed. The young priest's face was pitiful as he told me her story. She was the only child of Syrian parents, living in Mosul, whose poor soul had been stricken with darkness. She was under an hallucination, believing she had committed some dreadful crime, for which she could only atone by constant prayer and fasting. She would take no food, or sleep. All day long and for as much of the night as the monks permitted, she knelt on the hard stones, her lips moving constantly in prayer. She was emaciated and weak, supported only by the strength of her frenzy,

her poor face, which must once have been pretty, was hollow and worn, with tightly-drawn skin the colour of wax, and her unseeing eyes huge, luminous and black, had the rapt stare of the ecstatic. Behind her, in the shadow of a great pillar, crouched her father and mother, hand in hand, loving sorrowful souls, keeping watch over her poor mad vigil.

Outside Mar Behnan stands a small square building surmounted by a white cupola, from which one descends by a flight of precipitous steps into a low vault. On to one wall of the vault is fastened a heavy chain with which pilgrims suffer themselves to be fastened, remaining thus all night in prayer, in order to obtain something they wish for. The young priest gravely and with conviction assured me of the efficacy of this procedure. In the centre of the vault is a rough hole in the ground, said to be connected to Mosul by a tunnel, now caved in, and round this hole is centred a legend.

Very many years ago, a young prince by name Behnan, son of a certain King Sennacherib, came from afar to hunt in the Djebel Mag'Loub. During a shower of rain he took shelter in the hut of a holy man, a Christian, and in due course the conversation touched on matters of religion. The prince was startled by the hermit's assertion that he acknowledged but one God, and that He was infinitely more powerful than all the many gods of Mar Behnan. The latter, doubting, asked for a miracle as proof, to which the man of God assented. It chanced that Mar Behnan's heart was sorrowful because his favourite sister Sara (who later became a priestess and was known as Sara Kadasi) had been stricken with leprosy, and the prince demanded that she should be cured. The holy man struck the ground with his staff, whereupon a spring of pure water sprang up from the arid ground, in which the princess Sara, being fetched, was bathed and, emerging, was found cured of her leprosy. Convinced and grateful, the whole family and house-

hold of Mar Behnan were converted to Christianity. They were subjected to much persecution from their neighbours, and finally Mar Behnan and forty of his followers were killed by treachery. God in His Heaven, seeing this, caused the ground instantly to open and swallow up the bodies of the Prince, and his fellow martyrs, so that they should not be defiled by the profane hands of their murderers. Later on this little vault with its tapering cupola was built over the hole left in the ground.

The last hours of that journey took me to Nimrood, considered by most historians to have been the city built by Nimrod himself, though some of the inhabitants of the countryside call it Assur, or El Athur, and others believe it to be the Larissa spoken of by Xenophon. Its ruins were first brought to light by Layard, and his assistant Hormzud Rassan, who within two years unearthed the palaces of the kings Ashurnacirpal, Shalmaneser II, and Esarhaddon. Now all that remains to be seen is a hillock in the form of a pyramid at right angles to a flat mound about a kilometre long and half as wide. Now and again one stumbles in the long grass against a bit of old masonry, a curved stone that must once have been part of an archway, or a broken column, and in the middle in the earth, stands the eighteen-foot figure of some forgotten king, gazing south, remote, aloof, with, so it seemed to me, the ghost of a scornful smile on his carven face. There is something infinitely desolate and sad about Nimrood, almost uncanny in spite of a torrid sunshine. A raven croaked with harsh dreariness as I stumbled over the uneven ground, and I seemed to be haunted by the ghosts of mighty brown men who had lived and loved and fought and worked and dreamed, and whose bones long since had turned to dust beneath the long grass that tripped my feet. Sacrilegious and even more depressing than the raven, were the impudent and unwashed Arab shepherd boys who, neglecting the

flocks that browsed placidly in this mausoleum of mighty men and beautiful women, for the more promising occupation of pestering a tourist, who, assuredly to their simple minds would pay good baksheesh to see old stones, made me long to send them to join the ghosts they had never heard of.

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Of the days that followed there is little to be said ; a return journey across the Syrian desert that improved but little upon a closer acquaintance, a week spent re-crossing the fighting zone of Anatolia where there happened to be a war going on, a sheer nightmare this time, of dirt, discomfort, suspicion and semi-starvation.

Constantinople, Sofia, Belgrade, Paris, again these flashed by, but this time they looked good to me, for there was health and joy in my heart, and in my hands a bunch of wild-goose feathers that I here present to a long-suffering and I hope charitable world.